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## THE BEAUTIFUL GIRLS.

BY ARNOLD ISLER.

Oh, the girls, the beautiful girls!  
With their laughing eyes and dancing curls;  
How they bewitch us by day and by night,  
How they cause our hearts to beat with delight,  
Pleading, teasing, charming creatures!  
Bewitching smiles brightening their features!  
How can they deceive us, as oftentimes they do,  
With sweet, glowing words and eyes of bright blue?

How dearly we prize the beautiful girls,  
Far above rubies, diamonds or pearls!  
How delightful we feel whenever we meet  
The pretty loved ones on the busy street,  
Walking, talking, smiling so sweet,  
Dressed in dresses made exquisitely neat;  
But it beats the Old Harry what a big price  
We men have to pay for those dresses so nice!

Oh, the girls, the beautiful girls!  
How we love to finger their dancing curls;  
How we love to see roses, fresh and sweet,  
Bloom on their cheeks, while Love's moments fleet.

Cooling, wooing, evening hours away,  
Little dreaming of the coming day;  
Kissing is sweet, and squeezing is sport—  
Who wouldn't be a member of Cupid's court?

Oh! it's strange how our beautiful girls  
Have got into the habit of shaking their curls  
And smiling, whenever they chance to meet  
A fancy-dressed fop on the busy street;  
Winking, blinking, flirting away!  
Ostentatiously walking the streets all day;  
Dear, innocent girls! "Just out on a lark—  
Who cares for mother—we'll be home before dark."

Once I fell in love with a beautiful girl,  
With pretty black eyes, that would snap and whirl,  
And soft, warm cheeks, never stained with paint,  
And lips—by the gods! they'd tempt a saint;  
Daily, gayly, my Bonnie Jane!  
Met me at the end of the old farm lane:  
Fondly embraced 'neath a chestnut tree—  
Earth was Elysium when she was with me!

The sweetest scenes in life will oftentimes change  
To the bitterest; so you'll not deem it strange  
If I should tell you, in a deacon-like way,  
That on one delectable summer day  
My love, my dove, my innocent Jane!  
Left her home to follow a circus-train;  
Oh, Cupid! how couldst thou so cruelly seize  
My love, to mount her on the dizzy trapeze?

Still, I love the beautiful girls!  
With their laughing eyes and dancing curls,  
And go I through pleasure, and go I through woe,  
I will think of them wherever I go;  
Dearly, sincerely, my heart does beat  
For the kisses, so lovely, and good, and sweet;  
Bewitching creatures, more precious than pearls—  
A gift for earth without the beautiful girls!

## Adria, the Adopted: OR, The Mystery of Ellesford Grange.

AN AMERICAN ROMANCE.

BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON,  
AUTHOR OF "BRANDED," "SEA HAVEN," "NYMPH'S BRAVERY," ETC., ETC.

### CHAPTER IX.—CONTINUED.

VALERIA pounced down upon Nelly Kent with cat-like agility.  
"What have you stolen?" she demanded.  
Nelly met her searching gaze with a vacant stare, then thrusting her hand into her bosom drew forth a common rosary and began telling the beads, as though oblivious of the other's presence.

Valeria was not satisfied. She thought she had seen the gleam of gems, but at the instant Adria appeared in the doorway, and she forbore to press the conviction.  
"Had you not better have her searched?" she suggested, as Nelly quietly accompanied them back to the parlor.

Adria gave her an indignant glance.  
"I am sure there is no need," she replied.  
"She is not responsible for her actions in wandering harmlessly about, and even were she mischievously inclined there is nothing portable she could have procured in so short a time which we would not at a glance have found missing."

In her heart Nelly silently blessed the generous girl, but outwardly preserved her passive demeanor.

In a few moments she grew restless, and, intimating her desire to depart, Adria let her out at the grand entrance door, bestowing a few kind words at parting.  
"Heaven forgive me," muttered Nelly to herself, as she walked slowly down the broad pathway, "if I have made a mockery of any form, but Juana's beads have stood me good service!"

Out of the grounds into the highway, wholly absorbed in her own thoughts until a rough shout aroused her.

"Out of the way with ye, I say!"  
An open carriage, driven at a leisurely pace was now drawn up by the surly coachman. Occupied in herself, she was crossing the wheel-track in its direct course.

A lady, the only occupant of the vehicle, leaned forward to chide the man for his impatience. Nelly, glancing upward, met her gaze and fell back a pace, her face blanched to livid paleness. The other, for a second only, startled, then recognizing the death-like countenance, caught her breath in a moaning gasp and sunk back senseless amid the carriage cushions.  
It was Mrs. Templeton.

### CHAPTER X.

AFFAIRS at the establishment in Washington appeared fully as bad as represented. The smaller partners, Clarke and Nelson, were steady, thorough men, but lacking that important qualification, brains. Banks had wielded the whole of the business machinery. Had been, so to speak, the power driving it all, while they were the cogs and wheels working in obedience to his will.  
Implicit confidence had been placed in him. For a long period he was known to

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Valeria pounced down upon Nelly Kent with cat-like agility. "What have you stolen?" she demanded.

be speculating largely with interests foreign to the firm, but, as his own private account was ample, this gave rise to no uneasiness.

It was not until considerable sums had been quietly withdrawn, which, at the time, his companions in trade believed invested in behalf of the firm, and when bills supposed to have been settled long before began to come in on them, that suspicion awoke. Even then no active measures were taken.

Aware that Mr. Ellesford had been apprised of the state of affairs, they received Banks' assurance that his intervention had canceled all pressing obligations, and that he was keeping actual supervision over the interests of the establishment. With this they had been contented until made aware of the deception practiced upon them by the disappearance of the managing partner, and subsequent examination betrayed that they were on the very verge of ruin.

A rumor of their insolvency had got abroad, and bills were pouring in from all quarters. Their paper was afloat to an immense amount, their accounts at the different banks fully drawn by the absconding member.

Total bankruptcy seemed before them. The partners were holding a consultation in their private counting-room, to which, at Mr. Ellesford's request, Hastings had been admitted.

But no penetration or shrewdness could overcome the hard facts apparent. Could the immediate claims be met, the credit of the house sustained, they might bridge the crisis; but, most probably they would only succeed in staying off the evil day.

Hastings' situation was peculiar. As authorized agent of the Russell Brothers he was bound to prosecute their claim. Gratitude to Mr. Ellesford—perhaps a deeper emotion toward his daughter—and a full appreciation of the confidence reposed in him, made him shrink from the performance of his duty.

The latter considerations caused him to

hazard a leniency seldom extended by the Crofton firm.

"My dear Hastings," replied Mr. Ellesford, "your claim is but one of a hundred, and must share equally with all the rest. Should the worst come our assets must, I think, cover to a great extent our indebtedness; and I pledge myself to relinquish my last dollar rather than suffer the dishonor of our signature."

Meanwhile in another part of the city a scene was enacting which bore direct reference upon the issue at stake.

An inner office, dark and cobwebby, where few visitors were permitted to penetrate. The outer or entrance room was large and light, with two or three clerks' desks ranged about the walls, and an intermediate apartment furnished with carpet and baize-covered chairs was the place where Jonathan Sharpe, lawyer and broker, was in the habit of receiving his general customers.

When a visitor was ushered beyond this into the office first mentioned, the clerks in the outer room wagged their heads and exchanged knowing smiles. It was always conceded by them that some deep game was on hand.

At this time Jonathan Sharpe was closeted close in his private sanctuary. His figure was thin and angular, with limbs loosely put together. His face was long and narrow, teeth projecting, forehead high and narrow and eyes light cold blue. His sandy hair, straight and sleek, extended in sparse side-whiskers on his cadaverous cheeks. His clothes were rusty black, worn at the seams, loose and ill-fitting. By no means a prepossessing man, and one whose forty years of life had recorded no unselfish deed to add to the philanthropy of the world.

His companion was of a different type, and in his erect bearing and pale, regular features we recognize an old acquaintance—Colonel Templeton. He was engaged in examining some legal-looking documents submitted for his inspection.

"You find them all correct, sir?" inquired Sharpe, with professional servility.

"Quite so! Now tell me how you managed all so admirably."

"Well, sir, you know he had lost heavily in the Pacific Branch Bond business; in fact, was far beyond his own depth even there. Just then the Lucky Gulch mining stock began to show signs of life, and as his legal adviser, I suggested that here was a chance to regain his balance. Stock was low yet, but sure to rise rapidly. He bit greedily. I advised him to take the commission elsewhere—I was over-crowded."

Colonel Templeton's lip curled cynically, but he motioned for the other to proceed.  
"Nothing would satisfy him but that I should undertake it, so I consented at last just to accommodate a liberal patron, you know. He had lifted the bank account before, and now raised twenty thousand dollars on the Company's paper."

"I bought at fifty per cent. below. Stock went up steadily. When it reached thirty below I consulted with him, but he had got the old fever on again and held fast. At twenty below I went to him again, told him I was called away for a day and offered again to sell. But he was determined to wait."

"Ten hours later I sold at par. Shares went up to four above, and then wavered. I took a trip out of town—was detained two days. Found Banks waiting my return, raging like a madman. Lucky Gulch mining stock had fallen to seventy below, and still going down."

"He ordered me to sell at any sacrifice. In his excited state I thought it imprudent to let him know that I had disobeyed his previous injunction."

"He received ten thousand of his investment, and I added a morning paper with the list of packet ships marked. Sharpe, lawyer, is better off by another ten, and twenty thousand waits Colonel Templeton's command."

During his recital he had dropped his ser-

vile, fawning manner, adopting a confidential and boasting tone. The unreserved communication evidenced that Colonel Templeton controlled the main-spring of this establishment.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant," commended the other, satisfied.

There was some further communication, and when Colonel Templeton left the office of Jonathan Sharpe, he directed his steps immediately toward the great mercantile establishment of Ellesford, Banks & Co.

A blundering cash boy directed him to the counting-room, and he came in upon them ere the partners had concluded their consultation. Hastings sprung up to prevent intrusion, but Mr. Ellesford rising bade him enter.

Templeton advanced, including them all in a general salutation, but addressing himself to the oldest member.

"Ellesford, is this true that I hear? Is it possible you are driven to the wall?"

"Then general rumor has caught it already," exclaimed Ellesford, bitterly.

"Not so! I got it from one who knows something of that scoundrel Banks' villainous proceedings, and I have come to offer you such assistance as lies in my power. I have already commissioned my agent to buy in all immediate claims he may find against you."

Mr. Ellesford's eyes dimmed and his voice faltered with grateful emotion.

"God bless you, Alan Templeton, for a true friend," he cried, clasping his hand warmly.

### CHAPTER XI.

NELLY KENT tottered rather than walked over the frozen road. This unexpected encounter had aroused conflicting memories which closed down around her, shutting out all of her present monotonous existence. Bitter memories they were, and a fierce passion raged within her breast.

Her step grew firmer and more even, but her eyes burned still with that inward fire. Her face, dropping its passive mask, was transformed so completely that those who had seen her shortly before would scarcely have recognized her as the same. Her fingers closed involuntarily over the rosary she still clutched and the beads crushed within her grasp. She shook them from her open hand, but the trivial incident had brought a new train of reflection.

"Revenge might destroy, but it can not restore," she muttered. "There is nothing left for me—nothing!"

She was nearing the strip of woodland skirting the road before Juana's cabin. A squirrel frolicking amid the branches peered down at her with bright, curious eyes. A partridge separated from its covey fluttered up from among the deadened leaves. But she noted neither, nor did a shadow flitting from clump to clump of tree and bush attract her more.

The air was cut with a whizzing sound and a missile thrown by an unseen hand fell at her feet. It startled her and she hurriedly scanned the surrounding prospect. There was no one to be seen. The stone defined in the bare pathway was wrapped with a strip of something white. Stooping, she detached a slip of paper, written in a struggling but not an uncultivated hand.

"If you would hear of one you think dead come alone to the Cross-lot stile at dusk. Let no one see this. ONE WHO KNOWS YOU."

Nelly pondered over it. But no gleam of light came to relieve her perplexity, or reveal its authorship. She thrust it into her bosom with the precious trinket and pursued her course. The squirrel in the limbs above rattled down a shower of chipped bark, and she started as though expecting some further revelation. None came and she hurried on.

Juana received her silently. A bright fire blazed upon the earth, the kettle swinging above it sung merrily. An odorous beverage steamed upon the hob. Every thing had been made bright and cheerful for her return.

The old woman undid her wrapping, observing with anxious eye the troubled, pre-occupied look she wore.

"I knew it would be so," she muttered, hanging the cloak on a wooden peg in the further corner. "I knew she could not go there and come back the same. I only wonder 'tis not worse."

Nelly looked round at her presently.

"I saw her, Juana—that woman?"

"Did you see nothing worse?" Juana questioned, with suppressed eagerness.

"What could be worse?" Nelly's eyes caught the lurid glow again. "I thought my heart was steeled and dead, but both my love and my hate have come back to me today."

Juana's skinny hands clutched each other in painful grip, but she only waited and watched in silence.

Nelly's face was working convulsively, but she turned to the cheerful blaze and with a great effort calmed herself again.

"Is she here? Why did you not tell me?" she asked, her voice lullied to weary monotony.

"Who? Where?" Juana inquired, with a vacant expression as though trying in vain to comprehend the question.

"You know—the woman!"

"Was she—was she in the flesh?" the old woman asked in an awesome whisper.

The other looked at her fixedly for a moment.

"Come here, my good Juana," she said. "You have not shared the deception practiced upon others—you do not believe me crazed? I may have been mad once; I think I must have been, but you know I am sane now. Did you think I was speaking of illusions?"



"I thought she would see it as it was that night," Juana muttered, but she said aloud, humbly:

"Tell me?"

"I met her upon the road. She was in a carriage, but leaned forward and looked me in the face, then she faded away as she did once before," she said.

"She remembers it and can speak calmly," Juana groaned, in her spirit. "Mrs. Templeton? They are at The Firs," she replied. "She seldom goes out. I thought you need never meet her."

"I pray that I may never again. Oh, I pray that I never may," Nelly cried out, her forced composure giving way, and breaking into a passion of strong sobs.

The old woman soothed and petted her as she would have done a little child, and when the paroxysm had passed led her into the inner room and persuaded her to lie down upon the couch. Nelly, weakened by her recent agitation, obeyed. Juana brought her a hot drink and in a few moments more she slept peacefully.

It was growing dusk when she awoke. Her uninjured hand, which had clasped the locket while she slept, came in contact with the slip of paper she had concealed with it. She strained her eyes in the twilight to again read the mysterious words.

A lethargic feeling possessed her, an activity which was the natural reaction of over-strained nerves. She shook it off, however. The scrawl had gained new import to her which was not hope, but rather a wild desire, an expectation of finding it through this means.

She crept to the door which was ajar and listened. Juana was crooning a monotonous refrain. The fire had burned down to a bed of dull coals, and over these the old woman was crouching, her weird figure defined in the reddish glow, absorbed in herself to the exclusion of any thing which might occur about her.

Nelly drew herself silently over the floor, reached the long cloak from its peg and gained the door. The latch lifted noiselessly; she flitted over the threshold and away into the dim gloaming.

An hour later Juana listened at the door of the inner room. Perfect silence reigned. "She'll want no more to-night," she muttered, satisfied. "It's best so, best so."

Then she spread out her own bed upon the kitchen hearth, and was soon lost in the unconsciousness of profound slumber.

It was broad day when she was astir again. She added fuel and blew up the coals smothered in their blanket of gray ashes until they threw out a growing, sparkling flame. Then she tidied the outer room and went about preparing the morning meal, listening now and then for sounds of wakefulness from the other chamber.

None came. The old woman muttered to herself and went about quietly, fearful of disturbing the sleeper. The sun mounted higher and higher in the sky.

"Strange," repeated Juana. "She seldom sleeps so late!"

Then she rapped softly on the door of the inner room. It swung back beneath her touch, and with a thrill of apprehension she stepped within. The bed was disturbed but not occupied. The paraphernalia of the chamber remained in the exact order it had presented the previous day, but Nelly Kent was not there.

The hours passed, and she did not appear. Juana, tortured with anxiety, racked her brain in vain to account for her absence. She searched the grounds, where Nelly was accustomed to walk, with like result. She had disappeared from the cabin suddenly as she had come.

The day wore on to mid-afternoon, and Juana could remain no longer inactive. She went first to the Grange, but the missing woman had not been there. Then she directed her steps toward The Firs, her face taking on the dogged, sullen expression it sometimes wore as she walked.

She knew better than to apply for admittance at the servants' door. She crouched behind some bushes at the front, and waited.

The opportunity she sought came soon. Reginald came out alone, slamming the door after him, his step crunching heavily down the path, fairly brushing against the bushes which screened her.

She darted out of her concealment, up the broad steps, and into the hall, ere the slow-motioned servant whose duty it was to attend the door had appeared there. A rack, hung with out-door garments, furnished her a hiding-place. Footsteps approached, passed her, and the man turned the key in the massive lock of the entrance door.

Fairly within, Juana was at a loss how to proceed. Her object was to see Mrs. Templeton alone.

A light, mincing step came into the hall, and, peeping from her cover, she beheld a smart maid-servant bearing a small tray. The man, still loitering there, planted himself in the girl's way.

"Arrah, me honey, but it's toll ye'll be payin' for the passage-way, I take it!"

The girl tossed her head coquettishly, and stopped to parley. The brawny, impudent Irishman was a favorite with her class.

"Let me pass, Mr. Murphy," she said, in strong French accent. "The madame will wish her tea."

"Musha, thin, ye'll not be kapin' the madame waitin' for so shunall a matter, will ye, mavournen?"

There was some further dispute, but it ended in the fellow snatching the kiss he coveted, and the maid's brisk tongue scolded vigorously, as she slowly ascended the stair.

The man disappeared, and Juana cautiously followed the girl.

Mrs. Templeton was quite ill, and in her private chamber. She was lying back in a velvet easy-chair, her dead-white cashmere wrapper scarcely more colorless than her wan face.

She sent away the maid, but the tray of dainty edibles stood by untouched.

She started nervously as the door unclosed again, and spoke without turning her head.

"What is it, Felice?"

The intruder advanced without making reply, and Mrs. Templeton, looking around wearily, confronted—not Felice, but Juana. A frightened cry rose to her lips, but the woman stilled her with a gesture.

"Hush!" she said. "I have come for no harm. Where is my mistress?—tell me that! What have you done with her?"

Mrs. Templeton regarded her wonderingly.

"How should I know?" she asked.

"You met her yesterday—she told me so. This morning she was gone. Has she not been here to you?"

The lady's eyes distended with some fearful agony.

"Was that your mistress?" she whispered.

"Ay, that was my mistress! I have changed since your bonny ladyship saw me at the Grange," she added, bitterly.

Mrs. Templeton shrank back, as though struck with a sudden blow.

"Let it go," continued Juana. "Only tell me what I came to learn."

"I know nothing of her. She has not been here."

The old woman faced her angrily.

"Don't seek to deceive me," she cried out. "No matter what she came for, she must have been here."

"As God is my witness, I have not seen her—I have told you the truth," declared the other, and her words carried conviction to the heart of the listener.

"Then may the Virgin protect her!" said Juana, solemnly. "She must indeed have gone mad at last! Woman, it is all your work! Think of it, and rejoice, if you can."

Mrs. Templeton cried out, sharply:

"Oh, Juana, Juana! You do me wrong! She did injustice to a noble heart, and still keeps it upon a sainted memory!"

Juana looked down upon her with stern unbelief.

"Believe me! He was true to her always, as true to himself. I would have told her then, but I was weak and ill, and her anger frightened me. Do you tell her for me, that his thought never swerved a hair's breadth from his devotion to her. Tell her, if you would give a ray of peace to a miserable, tortured woman!"

"Swear it!"

"I swear it, by all that I hold dear or sacred!"

And if it be so, I will never tell her. Cruel, cruel! It would but heap burning coals upon her head!"

#### CHAPTER XII.

THE Washington firm breathed freely again. Ruin had at last been averted. They had no doubt that, with the leniency Colonel Templeton would surely exercise, they would recover their tottering foothold.

The panic had been productive of serious reflection in the mind of Mr. Ellesford, apart from the intense anxiety he experienced upon the immediate result. These years of absence from the actual struggle of business had unfitted him for again coping with its complications successfully as he had once done. He determined, soon as the establishment should be fairly on its feet again, to withdraw from it entirely, and devote his remaining years to the quiet enjoyment of domestic comfort, untrammelled by aught of other interest.

Hastings had proved to him of invaluable aid. The young man's clear insight and indubitable perseverance had done much toward unraveling the knotted skein of mingled sophistries and facts which Banks had built up as an intrenchment against the discovery of his embezzlements.

The absconding partner had been traced, by an obscure route, on which he had turned and doubled, until he was, with difficulty, followed by the law's sleuth-hounds, to a seaport in a neighboring State, where all trace of him was lost. It was supposed that he had escaped to Europe, and there the pursuit ended.

Hastings now found himself fully able to resume his journey, and the business so long suspended. But first he went back with Mr. Ellesford to the Grange, having chosen a terminus bringing it within his direct course.

Only a single day's interval, and then he should leave the gray old Maryland homestead which had given him a nearer glimpse of earthly paradise than he had known before.

Adria was out on her favorite walk, commanding an unobstructed view of the bay, rolling dark now beneath the dull winter sky.

She knew of Hastings' near departure, and fully realized the precious value of every intervening moment while she could yet hear the tones that had awakened all her dormant wealth of woman's love, meet the earnest glances which sought hers ever with tender persistency.

Yet, with woman's inconsistency, she had fled away from the warmth and the brightness within, rendered doubly alluring by his presence, out here beneath the cold gray sky, with the raw wind sweeping in over the water to get a foretaste of the loneliness and pain the coming days would bring her. She knew herself, and knew her love, but, feeling him worthy of it, deemed herself ennobled by the purity of her affection, even should it never be acknowledged save to her own heart.

There Hastings found her. He had caught a glimpse of her figure speeding across the bare roadway, and followed, knowing it to be his last chance of having her to himself alone.

They spoke of incidental things—of the quiet landscape, of the ships fluttering their pennons far out upon the bay—of his own departure.

"I shall miss the pleasant companionship of the past few weeks when I go out into the world again," he said.

"But you will return to your home and friends soon, and forget us all," she replied, with a tinge of reproach in her voice.

"I have no home and no friends," he said, sadly. "At least, none to bind me with a single loving tie. If 'home is where the heart is,' I shall leave it behind me, on this lovely Chesapeake shore!"

"I can almost wish it so, that it may bring you back again," Adria returned, feeling it incumbent on her to say something, and scarcely noting her words.

"I shall come back if you bid me," he exclaimed, reading her face with earnest eyes.

Fearing that she had unconsciously committed herself, she blushed and stammered: "Papa has taken a warm liking to you. He will always be pleased to have you come."

He saw her embarrassment and gained a confidence he had never before possessed, in witnessing it. Clapping her hands in both of his, he asked:

"But what does papa's daughter say for herself? It is she who will prove my magnet."

She blushed painfully, endeavoring to disengage her hands.

"Adria, Adria! I love you—so wholly, so utterly, that it does not seem presumption to tell you of it. Now, can you bid me come again, Adria?"

Her hands ceased their fluttering and rested quietly in his. She turned her face to him peacefully content.

"Come back!" she said.

A step rustled over the crisped turf and

Reginald Templeton passed them, lifting his hat with courtly ease. Out of their sight, his face took on a livid passion, and his white, even teeth ground together in bitter rage.

"Ay, the game is in your hands now," he muttered, "but luck will turn. I can afford to wait."

Hastings' exit in search of Adria left Mr. Ellesford alone. Valeria came to the door presently, starting a little when she saw him, and hesitating.

"Come in," he said, kindly.

So she advanced and stationed herself in a position where his eyes, wandering ever and anon from the paper he held, must rest upon her.

She was slightly pale, and wore a wearied, listless expression. Her full proportions were well defined against the dark background of the great chair she had chosen. Her large, fair hands were clasped idly in her lap, her eyes gazing straight before her with preoccupied, intent look.

She would have made a good actress. Her postures, her expressions, were all studied with reference to effect; and this attitude had been conned by her before the long mirror in her own chamber. But Mr. Ellesford could in no way be aware of this.

Glancing at her now and then, he thought what a model of perfect womanhood she was. From that he fell to studying her face, and grew keenly observant of the wearied, sorrowful expression she wore. Her eyes brimmed full of sudden moisture, and two great crystal drops hung upon her fringing lashes. He threw aside his screening paper with real alarm.

"My dear Miss Walton, what has occurred to give you pain? Are you unhappy here?"

She started, and brushed aside the potent tears.

"Pardon me. I am foolish, weak; but, believe me, I did not mean to indulge in obtrusive sorrow."

"Then you have a grief? Can we do nothing to alleviate it? Both Adria and I are most anxious to make your position here agreeable to you."

"You are very kind," she replied, constrainedly.

He regarded her closely.

"Certainly my daughter has done nothing to cause you pain?"

"Oh, no, no! It is but my own folly. You would despise me were I to tell you."

"Confide in me, Valeria. Let me show you how anxious I am to promote your happiness."

"Oh, thank you for the kind interest you have displayed, and thank you again for receiving me so readily here in your household. I see now I was wrong in wishing to come. I thought I would find a refuge here. I would be content, and your many kindnesses reproach me for yet remaining unsatisfied. But," her voice faltered brokenly, "it all serves to recall a time when those loved who loved me, and whom I loved. I see you lavish your affection upon your daughter, and think of the dear father who held me the idol of his heart. I feel myself so lonely—so desolate!"

Here she broke down with a sob, burying her face in a snowy mist of cambric and lace. Mr. Ellesford was much distressed.

"Oh, pray, don't," he said, in his awkward man-fashion, endeavoring to soothe her grief. "My dear Valeria, what can I do for you—how can I assure you that we regard you as very dear to us? I am sure Adria loves you as a sister. Oh, that she was here now," he concluded, in an undertone.

Miss Walton grew more composed. She understood the effects of woman's tears, but would not risk a too copious flow to the detriment of her beautiful eyes. Inflamed lids and swollen nose would not aid her cause.

"Adria is very, very kind," she answered, sadly. "But she does not understand my nature; she gives me none of her warm sympathy. She deems me cold, unfeeling, and her injustice chills me. I long so for love and tenderness."

Here she had resource again to her handkerchief.

This was displaying a new phase of Miss Walton's disposition, but he did not stop to think of that.

"I am surprised—pained," he began, letting his hand drop on her brown braids. She put up a soft palm touching it, and thanked him with tearful glance. Her loveliness and her distress were fast folding him in the glamour she was striving to throw around him.

"Valeria, tell me, how can I comfort you? Can my love, my service, be aught to you?"

As though actuated by sudden impulse, she caught his hand and carried it to her lips, then dropped it with a vivid lightening of color on cheek and brow. He was fairly intoxicated now with the excitement of revelation which this action gave him.

"Valeria, my darling! My peerless queen of beauty!" he cried, catching her to him. "Is it true, my own?"

Valeria's tears were chased away by triumphant smiles, and there and then she secured her unsuspecting victim with vows exchanged.

"But Adria!—what will she say?" she questioned, presently, with an air of timidity. A pang of remorse struck him, but it was too late now for such consideration.

"Adria will rejoice in my happiness," he replied. "Tell me again, Valeria, that you are perfectly content."

"More than content," she said. At the moment, through the plate-glass window, she caught sight of Reginald Templeton's stalwart form advancing up the pathway. A bitter, yearning pain shot through her heart. She realized how empty were the words she uttered, and shrunk beneath his touch when the old man's lips pressed her forehead. He thought it woman's modesty.

That same day Kenneth sought an interview with Mr. Ellesford, and in straightforward, manly way told him the story of his love and ambition.

"I am a poor man now," he said, "but the knowledge of Adria's love will strengthen me to overcome opposing circumstances. I shall not claim her until I can offer a firm support, and a station not wholly removed from the sphere in which she now moves. She is willing to wait. Will you not assure us of your consent, Mr. Ellesford?"

The elder man might not have acceded so readily had it not been for the bond he had so lately assumed. As it was he did not refuse his favor.

"I must stipulate that there be no binding engagement," he said. "You are both young and may change. You, going into the world, will be tried in a thousand ways; at best you have a hard, perhaps tedious battle before you. It would be ungenerous to confine my daughter to a far-off possi-

bility. Leave her free, but, if you both prove constant, I will gladly welcome you as my son when you are able to claim her."

The young lovers were fully satisfied with this, and the future unrolled itself a hopeful scroll before them.

What a memory that the bright moments of our lives are not overshadowed by the knowledge of events to come.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 85.)

## The Black Crescent: OR, COALS AND ASHES OF LIFE. A MASKED MYSTERY OF BALTIMORE.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.,

AUTHOR OF "HOODWINKED," "RALPH HAMON, THE CHEMIST," "THE WARNING ARROW," ETC., ETC.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### A RACE FOR LIVE GAME.

WE have said that weeks had passed since we left the pursuing parties on the cars, at the depot, in Baltimore.

How chilled with unhappiness were, at first, those weeks to Eola!

Each cold blast that whistled in on winter's wings seemed to grow more icy in its wailing voice, and fell upon the young girl's ear with saddened, mournful sound.

How different this winter to those she had been accustomed to pass amid the warmth and gaiety that ever cheered her father's house, prior to the events which led to their flight. She missed the pleasant parties, soirees and countless other bright features of life, which had, hitherto, figured in her unclouded existence; and the young heart chafed in the shadows that hovered for the first time on her pathway.

But, how nobly had she striven to banish the encraving broodings which, at times, crept upon her!

Her face was schooled to smiles that, while they deceived the one for whom they were forced, betrayed how severe the tax she imposed upon herself; yet the lips spoke naught but words to encourage him whose only strength was in her resignation and promises of abiding love.

Harnden Forde had told his daughter all. Yes, with quivering lips, he poured the whole story of his past life into her timid ears, and, weeping like a child, he intermingled the sad narrative of his wife's wrongs, with moans of penitence.

The discarding of Bertha, the infatuation that held him to Louise Ternor's will—the woman of whom he could speak but as a beautiful demon; his attempt upon the life of the Richmond lawyer, whom he had bribed to steal the marriage record; the theft of the Black Crescent, at the instigation of the woman whose wish had once been his law; the spurning of his outraged wife, when, after all her suffering, she had come to him and offered a forgiveness which he had set aside with harsh words; the final desertion of the siren who had wrought his ruin—and her note of Satanic triumph; the letter of warning from the fortune-teller, who, even then, he believed to be a reader of the stars and true Prophetess of Fate; the horrible, meaning contents of that letter—all this was told her, and her heart had near stood still as she listened to the fearful detail.

But it was past. Harnden Forde had kept his promise to his child, and Eola, true to her own pledge, tried in every way to cheer her stricken and repentant parent back to the semblance of his former self.

She would smile, even in those hours of absolute misery; for what but misery to know that a father who held the precious affection of a pure, saint-like child was, after all, a mere villain who had sought, willfully, the destruction of his wife, and torn from that wife the dearest gems on earth—her children?

He repented. Upon this Eola built her comfort, with promises that Heaven would not deny forgiveness to a repentant soul; and more—no doubt soon clear away the mist of trouble that dimmed the day of life. How alike these two sisters, strangely separated—Ora and Eola—in gentleness and faith!

She had work before her. She was not, like her father, given to foolish superstitions—who could be, holding faith in Truth and Light?

The first task was to uproot this superstition; for, while it would ease the mind of the tortured man, it would, also, bring her nearer to Austin Burns.

With a determined will, she set about the work, and knew not, until then, how admirable an actress she was. She would ridicule, then denounce, then strive, by persuasive arguments, such as only woman can use, encouraged afresh with each effort, by marking a decidedly beneficial result.

As the days went by, she applied herself with freshening ardor, and, at the same time, spoke of her mother—of her mother's nature, which, though she could remember nothing of its love, was one, she felt sure, to forgive, if not forget.

And Eola longed to see that mother. Would that some circumstance might bring them together! was her constant thought.

Harnden Forde was changing. His eyes, at times, sparkled with their old light; his sunken cheeks were filling with flesh; the haggard look had almost disappeared, and a flush that had not tinged his face for many days, now told of health and reviving strength.

The twentieth of February arrived.

It was a day Eola had anxiously looked forward to, for, on this occasion, she meant to use the picture of rejoicing people, to demonstrate the pleasures of those who cast aside all care, and even forget the absorbing mazes of business pursuits; and to the picture would be added her own voice, to further the scheme of resuscitation.

Harnden Forde ate his breakfast that morning with a wholesome appetite, and smiling at the merry conversation of his watchful child.

"Such a glorious day, father!" she exclaimed, when they entered the parlor, after the morning meal.

"Yes," he returned, quickly; "and we must not be idle. Come, hurry now, and get your things on. Remember, this is the day of the Carnival!"

How like himself he seemed! With heart bounding and face glowing, she hastened to procure her habit, and, in the mean time, Forde had sent for a barouche.

Eola was inexpressibly happy as they were being driven away from their boarding-house, which was near the east square of the Capital.

She was happy in the result of her great exertions, for Harnden Forde, as he sat there

beside his beautiful child, talked, acted—*was* like other men.

On they went, filled with eagerness for the sight that awaited them—a sight which had brought thousands from all parts of the United States; and as they whirled into the avenue, amid-blingled with the gay throng of racing carriages, Forde's face soon betrayed how contagious was the general enthusiasm.

On, up the avenue, commenting, laughing; and Eola's lovely features, twice lovely in the outline of joy, attracted the attention and admiring gaze of many.

Her deep blue eyes vied with the soft azure of the skies; and, anon, a silvery laugh rung from her lips, like the warble of a bird. Her long, rippling tresses, flowing in a cloudy mass about her shoulders, glistened in the sunlight like a golden mist.

On, hearkening to the ring of jest and bursts of merriment; and then they turned about, at Seventh street, to return upon the floor-like drive, for the races were about to commence.

At that instant, Eola saw every trace of color recede from her father's face. A laugh was upon his lips, but it seemed frozen there. The change in his demeanor was abrupt, startling.

She saw that he was trembling—that his eyes appeared fixed, in their old state of terror, upon something on the north pavement of the avenue.

Filled with apprehension, she laid her hand upon his arm. He did not move.

"Father, what is it? What is the matter?"

No answer. Involuntarily, her eyes followed his.

There she saw what had startled him. And it was not without a shuddering feeling she beheld the man for whom, above all others, she cherished a bitter loathing, and whose clutches they had hoped to escape in going to Washington.

Yes, it was Harold Haxon, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

He saw them, and Eola fancied there was an expression of devilish triumph in the villain's face, as he looked at them.

Forde seemed paralyzed; but Eola, with the quickness of thought, cried to the driver:

"Back! back to our house at once! Use your whip!"

Prompt to obey the order, the driver touched his horses with the whip, and the mettled steeds sprang forward.

Eola looked around. Harold Haxon had disappeared.

Away, away they went—the other vehicles about them seeming to stand still as they dashed past; away with the speed of wind, for she had again told the driver to use his whip.

At Four-and-a-half street she turned her head to look back. To her astonishment and horror, Haxon was on the pavement, nearly abreast of them. He had crossed over to the south side, where he could run with more freedom.

A sardonic smile played about the corners of his mouth, and he raised his hat in a mocking bow.

Harnden Forde had not yet said a word. His lips were glued, and he trembled as with an ague.

Reaching the Capitol, they whirled around and sped up the north hill.

Eola saw her pursuer enter the west gate. His plan was easily divined. He would head them off.

"Now is my time!" she thought, aloud, and in the same breath, the driver was ordered to turn his horses down New Jersey avenue.



was his pale gray eyes removed from the object of his pursuit; not once did he notice the cries of tantalizing urchins who, thinking him one of the features of amusement for the day, greeted him as he sped past, with shouts and huzzas.

He ran just outside the curbstone, where the stretch was almost a clean one. At Four and a half street, a policeman saw him coming, and extended his arms, shouting, "Hold on there! Get back into line—hurry!"

Crewly frowned; he raised his umbrella, doubled his fist, and cried:

"Stand a-s-i-d-e! Knock you down if you get in the road! Take care—ha! Now then!—so!" like a shot, with a Herculean bound, a sidelong leap that seemed to twist him in a ball, he evaded the officer and continued on, on like a race-horse.

The act was applauded with a faint cheer. On any other occasion, he would have had the impudence to stop, bow, and compliment the policeman on his efficiency. But now he was deaf.

At Second street, a boy who saw him coming, immediately set his brain to work for a plan to get up a laugh.

When Crewly drew near, there was a reception ready for him.

His eyes were riveted upon the fleeing barouche, his whole attention engrossed with the pursuit; he saw nothing, heard nothing.

Suddenly something dark was hurled out beyond the curb, and tangled itself between Crewly's legs. The lawyer stumbled, kicked vigorously; there was an unearthly howl, a snarl, a snap, a whine of agony, and a frightened terrier, with ribs aching, started full run up the avenue—his fright and speed augmented by a shower of stones and loud cries.

"Hang it!" muttered he, not delayed even by this occurrence; "hope that boy 'll get his nose cracked before he goes home to-night."

On still on went the barouche, and like a bound on the scent of game followed the determined lawyer.

He was possessed of good wind; but it soon became a trying vexation to keep up his straining gait. His face was red, the perspiration stood out upon his forehead, he panted for breath.

"There they go! Hang it!—wish they'd stop!"—as the barouche turned to ascend the north hill.

When he reached the railroad, he saw them half-way to the top.

"Lord!" he ejaculated, with an effort; "what a run! What a hill! But I've almost got 'em. Get 'em presently!"

Up, up—presently the vehicle made another turn and dashed away more furiously than ever down New Jersey avenue.

Crewly was becoming disgusted with the chase, which, he feared, was to prove a longer one than he counted on.

"Hang it! Why don't they reach the end of the route?"

He had reached the narrow plank-way that serves for a pavement, and arrived at the temporary steps, when two men confronted him—Harold Haxon and Gil Bret.

Taken aback by their unlooked-for presence, he stopped in his headlong course and gazed at them in astonishment.

They, too, were breathing hard in the severe tax of physical power they had undergone. For a second, they eyed the lawyer in silence; Crewly returned the stare with interest.

Gil Bret was first to speak. A frown added to the ugliness of his ill-cut features, and, clinching his fist, he stepped toward their mutual enemy.

"Look out!" gasped Crewly, fully out of breath. "Take care—vaguely! Bad business! Hit you once, knock you in half! Dangerous, I am! Frightful! Fight like the devil when I try! Keep off!" and the white umbrella was poised threateningly aloft.

Gil Bret did not notice either the warning or the upraised umbrella.

He saw, in the man before him, an enemy; and Harold Haxon glared upon him with intensest hatred.

"Look out now, I tell you," snapped Crewly, for the second time. "Dangerous! Don't fool with me! Get hurt!—hat—ras-cal!"

With a sudden spring, Bret closed upon the lawyer. His ponderous fist circled in the air, then descended with lightning quickness—upon an umbrella which met it halfway.

There was an execrable crack of knuckles, and Crewly muttered:

"Told you so!—dog!"

Maddened by the lawyer's coolness, Gil Bret followed up this blow with another, more successful, and, in return, his head was made to ring and ache by the dull thud of the white umbrella as it struck fairly on his temple.

A fierce oath, half howl of rage, burst from the bruiser's lips, and he clinched with his adversary.

Then the entire suppleness, strength and steel-like elasticity of the lawyer's body was displayed.

As they struggled for the mastery, Crewly would seem to twist and coil about his antagonist, then unwind, then wriggle and squirm into a fresh hold—all the while availing himself of opportunities to put in a blow with his hard, bony fist. Already, the bruiser's face was covered with blood.

Round and round they twined, swayed, bent, staggered. Gil Bret was now cool, but savage in that coolness. The cleverness with which Crewly avoided every blow and defeated every trick within the wrestler's art, was tantalizing.

Presently both tripped. Down to the ground, rolling several feet, pitched, tugged and fought the two men. Bret was on top. With an adroit movement, Crewly slipped, eel-like from the other's hold, and turned the tables. He was now uppermost, and held Bret down as if between a vice.

Now, dog!—where are we now, eh? How's that for a fight?"

In the excitement of the moment, he forgot the presence of a third party.

Barheaded, his comical countenance now flushed and stern with triumph, he looked down upon the whipped bruiser and raised his fist.

"Now, scoundrel!—you'll remember Chris. Crewly—ha!" Some one grasped his wrist, and a voice said:

"Hold!"

Turning, he beheld Harold Haxon, who held his wrist in a grip of iron and pointed a revolver at his head.

The muzzle of the deadly weapon covered him beyond a possibility of escape, and the villain added, hissing:

"Now then, my fine fellow, whoever you are, we'll put an end to your meddling life!"

His finger was upon the trigger. Crewly said nothing. With the face of a stoic, he awaited the fatal explosion.

"Shoot 'im, Haxy!" sputtered Bret, enraged at his defeat; "shoot 'im quick, an' let me up!"

The shot did not come. A sound of footsteps, a thud; Harold Haxon staggered against the railing and the pistol fell from his hand.

The new-comer was Austin Burns. Crewly leaped up, and Bret no sooner felt himself free, than he gained his feet and dashed off on a run.

In a vain attempt to catch the bruiser, Haxon was forgotten, and both villains made their escape.

While Crewly examined his umbrella, he said, snappishly:

"There—hang it! you've spoilt it all." "Spoiled what?" exclaimed Austin, as he picked up the revolver and put it in his pocket.

"What? Why, my little game. I had 'em! See? There you've kicked up a rum-pus that's let 'em get away. Bad business, this! The bad! I'm sorry."

"But, Mr. Crewly, your life was—"

"Never mind; all right. Where did you come from? Thought you were sick in bed."

"Not confined to my bed Mr. Crewly; only a little indisposed—"

"Nervous system out of order—ahem! Take care of yourself."

The day appeared so glorious and enticing, that I could not content myself in the house. I walked out to breathe the delicious air. I believe Providence must have guided my steps to this place. If I had not arrived just when I did, I fear an intimate friend of mine would have been killed."

"Hang it!" exclaimed Crewly, suddenly remembering what had brought him there; "I've had my run for nothing—except to nearly demolish a scoundrel!"

"What run?"

The lawyer briefly explained. While speaking, he gazed up New Jersey avenue, and afar off, in the neighborhood of "H" street, he saw the barouche.

"You have seen Eola, then?" cried Austin, eagerly.

"Yes," bluntly; "but it don't amount to stale beer—ahem! excuse me. She's evaporated. Gone. Lost again. See? Come, I'm going home. Had enough Carnival for this morning, I have. Wonder where Wat, Blake is? I'm nearly dead—tired out. Hungry, too! Ever get hungry, Burns?"

Yes? My sympathy, sir. Guess it's most dinner-time. Come along."

The rooms of the pursuers and pursued were not a stone's throw apart, yet neither knew the proximity of the other.

Fate, oftentimes, keeps us separated from an object by merest tissues.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## "JUST THE PARTIES I WANTED!"

EOLA breathed more freely when, after passing the depot, she turned and looked back to see if she had baffled her pursuer.

Haxon was not to be seen, and she drew a long sigh as she ordered the driver to slacken his speed. Then she said to her father:

"We have escaped him."

But Forde was silent. His eyes, now dull and staring, like they had been on the night of Austin's dismissal, were fixed vacantly on the floor of the barouche; and his face was of a livid paleness that filled her with alarm.

"Father, father, I say we have escaped them—him. He is no longer near us. Look up; look at me!"

Slowly he raised his head; the icy features told of pain and mental suffering.

Had all the long weeks of straining nerve and taxing brain, which had been Eola's, gone for naught? Was all the good she had done, to be thus dashed down and give place to the sinking spirits which had nearly reduced Harnden Forde to a tottering skeleton?

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time to prevent discovery; and though she did not know Gil Bret, she saw that he was a ruffian, an associate of Haxon's, and consequently her enemy.

Luckily, the two men did not turn their gaze up the street, nor dream how close their prey was to them. They soon passed on, mingling in the dense crowd.

After this, another and easier route was pursued homeward.

Once alone in their rooms, Harnden Forde sunk down upon a sofa, and buried his face in his hands.

Notwithstanding his words, which had so gladdened Eola's heart, he could not shake off the creeping sensations created by sight of his dreaded enemy, so close, and, he knew, so merciless.

Then he thought of the paper which Haxon held over him, which could expose him to public contempt, and the law—a blow that, with all his child's soothing and sustaining love, would completely break him down in the inevitable shame that threatened.

When she had laid aside her things, she went to him and reposed her golden tresses on his breast. He started, looked down upon the fair head, his heart throbbing with strong emotion.

"Eola—my little pet!" he said, in a low, tremulous voice, while tears glistened in his eyes; "I am leading you a most unhappy life."

"No, dear father!"—in a quiet whisper—"I am not so very unhappy, after all. You love me a great deal, do you not?"

"Love you, my dear, fond child!" he moaned. "Oh, God!—how much! You are all I have on earth. You are the only one who cares for Harnden Forde, now; how can I thank Heaven enough, that, in this great misery, I have one like you to speak of love, to cheer, to give me courage?"

Eola—God bless you, my child!" he caressed the trusting form that clung to him loving and confiding.

Eola said nothing. She could not trust her voice, then; for the carmine lips were quivering, and the blue eyes moistened as strange, mastering feelings welled within her heaving bosom.

"Presently she murmured, softly:

"I cannot be unhappy. But—why not?"

"What is it?"

"I do wish I could persuade you entirely from your fear of this man, Haxon! Believe me, he can not do you all the injury he threatens; there is a whisper that tells me he can not do you any great harm—and you know, father, when a woman speaks her thoughts upon the prompting of that instinct which seems her especial gift, it is seldom she is wrong."

"We are not like men, who reach conclusions by long arguments and delaying reveries; our perception is quickened by a mysterious prompting within, and when we speak, though the impression be one of the instant, it is almost always right. And I tell you, father—I know not why nor how it is—something says to me, 'do not fear Harold Haxon!' Now, won't you be yourself once more?"

Long, earnestly he gazed into the bright eyes that were upturned to his; then he printed a kiss upon her brow.

"I will try, Eola, dear child; I will try!"

The day marched on. Faintly to the ears of father and child, as they sat alone in their luxurious apartments, came the murmur of the distant Festival; but it had, for the time, lost its attractions for them.

The races were over; again the avenue swarmed with carriages and human beings. With every passing hour, the excitement grew more intense.

Old men forgot their years; ladies forgot the cold reserve and icy mien which "society" had chiseled in their lives, and many an act, though harmless, that would have excited remark at other times, marked their indulgence in the gay pleasures of the day.

Time flew on; night was fast approaching.

The miles of lanterns that lined the avenue on either side, from the Treasury to the Capitol, were being lighted, and brilliant illuminations began to dart innumerable rays upon the wooden drive.

Soon it was dark—dark? Then fairy-land must have been naught but chaos, for the City of Jewels—made famous by the immortal harp of poetry—itsself was vied in the blazing splendors that flashed on every side.

At intervals, the calciums shot forth their day-like glare; the gas-lamps, with their additional burners, hissed their flame in quivering jets; trees, in their dress of Chinese lanterns, seemed alive with fluttering sparks; not a house but glowed in the scintillation of its sparkling ornaments.

It was a sight to the eye the oft-praised Lantern Festival of the Orient; and, like a living sea, the broad street thronged with thousands.

Still, there was no cry of "Ecco mocciosi! Ecco mocciosi!" (Here are lights!) for there was not that packing of carriages, with merry occupants holding burning candles and tapers—each one striving to extinguish that of his neighbor, and when successful, crying, loudly: "Lenza mocciosi! Lenza mocciosi!" (Without a light!)

The gayest scene in the Roman Carnival is the *fiaccolata*; and this festive did seem neglected.

But the deficiency was well made up. Toward the Treasury building flowed the vast concourse of people, to witness the pyrotechnic display.

Rockets hissed through the air; bombs hurtled and exploded with terrific force; Bengallas lit up the southern portico, discovering a picture long to be remembered: fusillades, wheels, crasses, signs, national devices—all were flaming, hissing, burning, spitting, smoking, illumining the night in weird and fascinating colors; while loud exclamations of delight burst from the assembled host.

Harold Haxon and Gil Bret were lookers-on.

Their prey had escaped them for the day, and they passed the evening like thousands of others who surged, swayed, billowed around them, like the waves of the ocean.

Suddenly, an opening was made in the crowd. A barouche was approaching from the gate, to extricate itself from the great throng.

Gil Bret saw it as it advanced slowly between the living walls, and the moment he did so, he grasped his companion's arm.

"Look, Haxy!—by thunder! There's your gal. See!"

Haxon turned quickly.

A young girl was standing up in the barouche, and she did, indeed, resemble Eola.

Haxon made a movement to follow, elbowing his way forward. Bret kept close at his heels.

"That's her, Haxy, an' no mistake! Go for 'er!"

He had scarce spoken, when a tall, spare form squirmed in between them; a hand was laid upon the shoulders of each.

"Just the parties I wanted!" exclaimed a familiar voice.

Christopher Crewly held both in an iron grip!

(To be continued—continued in No. 80.)

## OLD GRIZZLY

## The Bear-Tamer:

OR, THE WILD HUNTRESS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS, AUTHOR OF "THE PHANTOM PRINCESS; OR, NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER," "THE BLACKFOOT QUEEN; OR, OLD NICK WHIFFLE IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH," ETC.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THROUGH THE FIRE.

"Yas, there come the rapsallions!" exclaimed the trapper, as he and the Avenger crept closer to the mouth of the cavern and listened to the shouts, yells and reports of the guns, as the leaden messengers flattened themselves against the boulder that blocked up the entrance; "hear 'em yelp and blaze away!"

"If they know who we are, I think they will make a long siege of it," remarked Warrama.

"Yas—I s'pose they'll be powerful glad to get you," replied the trapper, with a grin, as he looked significantly at him.

"Do you know who I am?" asked the latter, in amazement.

"I rather guess so; sometimes you call yourself Bender, but your name ain't Bender, er any more nor mine is, and mine is Nick Stringham. Then you're in the skulpin' business on the whole, and call yerself the Red Avenger, and the rapsallions call yer Warrama, which means 'bout the same thing—but what's the use, I know yer, and I know yer brother, years ago."

"What! did you know him?" demanded the hunter, pale with excitement. "Where did you meet him?"

"In St. Louis. I war with him that time, and kin tell you all about it, 'cause I seed it."

A treacherous Blackfoot had crept forward like the stealthy panther, until he caught the outlines of a man so engaged in conversation as to forget his personal danger for the moment; and, taking dead aim at him, pulled the trigger.

Poor Nick Stringham made no outcry; but, as the sharp crack of the rifle rung through the cavern, he sunk down to the ground, with a sigh and a groan, and was dead!

For one moment, the Avenger stood transfixed; for, accustomed as he was to scenes of violence, there was something in the sight of the trapper, stricken down before his face, so suddenly as to break the sentence he was uttering, and to leave it unfinished, that awed him. Then, conscious that he himself was in peril, he sprang back into the gloom, out of range, while he waited for the treacherous assassin.

A moment later he detected him, as he stealthily raised his head, and peered around the boulder, as if seeking to learn what he had accomplished. The Avenger waited until there could be no failure, and then, when his rifle broke the stillness, the shrieking Blackfoot fell over backward, with his head pierced by the white man's bullet.

"That's one more," he added, as he composedly reloading his piece, "but a dozen wouldn't be able to make up for the disappointment of knowing that I can never hear the poor trapper finish what he was going to tell me about my poor brother. I am sorry for him that, after running so many risks, he should at last fall in this way."

How large a number of Blackfeet were in pursuit of him, Warrama was unable to tell; but he judged there were fully a dozen, and they were not the men to permit him to escape from the trap into which he had run.

At the same time, the red-skins knowing the deadly marksmanship of the man who stood at bay, took good care to keep within the range of his rifle, occasionally firing a shot at random into the cavern, without any risk of receiving one in return.

This was peculiarly exasperating to the Avenger, to whom time was so precious.

"I'll wait till dark," he muttered, as he stood silent and watchful in the gloom of the cavern, "and then I'm going out of this infernal place, either alive or dead."

Only a few shots were fired during the afternoon, and the wily red-skins not only succeeded in withdrawing their fallen comrade from before the cave, but kept their own precious bodies safely out of range of the rifle of the hunter.

Darkness was just beginning to settle over the mountain, when the trained ear of the Avenger told him that the red-skins were at work at something in front of him. Creeping stealthily forward, he soon discovered that they were piling brush up in the mouth of his hiding-place.

"Going to burn me out," he muttered; "very well, go ahead!"

He waited until the whole front was darkened with the thickly-piled brush, and then, as he detected several shadowy figures moving cautiously about, he blazed away and popped one of them over, darting back so as to escape the return fire.

A yell told the result of the shot, and the next moment a bright, glowing spot in the brush showed that some dusky hand had plied the torch. The light rapidly increased in size, and presently the smoke began drifting backward into the cavern.

The Avenger exerted all his strength and pulled the boulder away from the entrance. Then he fastened the rifle to his back, and picking up the form of the dead trapper threw it over his shoulder, so







## NOT YET.

BY "CRAPE MYRTLE."

Not yet, oh! Time, not yet!  
Release thy flying sands,  
One tear, one fond regret,  
One farewell clasp of hands.  
'Tis all I ask, swift Time!  
To stay their feathered feet;  
To keep the parting chime  
Until two fond hearts meet.

Not yet, oh! Hope, not yet!  
Desert thy hallowed shrine,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,

Not yet, oh! Faith, not yet!  
Fall with thy heavenly beams,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,  
'Tis vain—those cries forget,

Not yet, grim Death, not yet!  
Stay thy relentless hand,  
Until our souls have met,  
Then wave thy blasting wand,  
Peace to the years that's fled,  
Since last my lips pressed hers;  
What is death when hearts are dead?  
Dead to its human foes,  
Then come Time, Faith and Hope,  
Renew each spell of thine,  
Live till a heart so dear, so dear,  
Beats close to mine.

## The Dark Secret: The Mystery of Fontelle Hall.

BY COUSIN MAY CARLETON,  
(MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING.)

## CHAPTER III.

## AN ESCAPE.

MACRETH.—"What do ye there?"  
WITCHES.—"A deed without a name."  
—SHAKESPEARE.

"Hush!" said a terrified voice, "don't make a noise—don't speak! It's only me." It was the voice of the child, Orrie. The young man glanced in wonder to the place where he had seen her last; but it was empty now.

"Come up-stairs, quick! Oh, hurry, hurry!" exclaimed the child, in an agonized whisper, as her little hand clutched his wrist for a moment, with almost supernatural strength, and then she flitted lightly and noiselessly as a shadow up the stairs.

There was no time to lose. The woman, who had stood listening while they spoke, now started to cross the room, and the stranger, taking up or three steps at a time, sprang lightly up the stairs and entered his chamber.

Little Oriole was there before him; and the moment he entered, she shot back the bolt and secured the door.

"Hush! Listen!" said the child, in the same startled whisper. "Make a noise when she comes, so she won't think you are asleep. If she hears you awake, she won't come in just yet."

The creaking sound stairs invariably produce in making when one treads them on tip-toe, warned them that the lady of the house was at hand, and the young man, acting on the child's hint, began to whistle, pausing now and then, and moving through the room as though he were preparing for bed. Oriole stood with her ear glued to the key-hole, listening with all her might, holding up one little finger warningly, and now and then giving him an approving nod. At last she raised her head, and drew a long breath.

"She's gone," she said, coming over and looking earnestly up in his face; "but she'll come back, and so will they—old Till, and Kit, and Blaize."

"My dear little girl, how in the world came you on the stairs that time?" said the young man, who at first had been inclined to distrust her; but the terror and earnestness of her face was too real to be assumed.

"I saw you, and came round the back way—there's another pair of stairs at the end of the house, that we came up sometimes, and I had to come round, or old Grizzle would have seen me. But, oh! what will you do?" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "They'll all come up by and by, and take all your money, and then—"

she paused with a violent shudder.

"Well, and then?" said the young man, looking at the child with more curiosity than any thing else.

"They'll put you down the cellar!" said Oriole, in an awe-stricken whisper, her large eyes dilating with horror.

"Will they?" said the stranger. "I'm not so sure about that. But, good heavens! what an infernal den this must be! Do they often put people down the cellar, as you call it—which, being translated, means murdering them, I suppose?"

"Oh no—not often. I only saw them put one down; and old Grizzle said—"

and the child clung to him as she spoke, and her great black eyes grew wild and horror-stricken again—"that if I ever told she would put me down with him. Oh! don't you tell her! Oh! don't tell her!" she cried, clasping her little hands in an agony of entreaty.

"Tell her, my dear little savior!" said the young man, sitting down on a chair, and lifting her up on his knee. "Not I, indeed! What makes you live in such an accursed place?"

Oriole lifted up her black eyes, and looked at him in the greatest astonishment at such a question.

"Why, because I've got to," she said decidedly.

"What relation is this old hag of Hades to you, my child?"

"She ain't nothin' to me, as I knows of. I ain't nothin' to nobody, I guess."

"Then how came you to live here with her?"

"Lor! how should I know?" said the child, with an impatient jerk of her shoulders. "Where's the good of your asking about that, when you know well enough they're coming up to kill you, by and by?"

"That's true enough, by Jove!" said the young man, starting up. "We must take measures to baffle their kind intentions, my precocious little friend. I heard them mention a trap-door under the bed when I was listening on the stairs, and here goes to look for it."

He attempted to move the bed as he spoke, but it resisted all his efforts.

"You can't move it," said Oriole, and there ain't no use a-trying. Don't you see it's nailed down?"

"Well, but what about the trap? I must see after that, my little sprite." And he lifted the valance of the bed, and stooped down to examine the floor.



THE DARK SECRET.

"Ugh!" said Orrie, with a shudder; "that's the way they go down cellar, and that's the way they'll come up here. Don't you lift it up—I wouldn't go near it for the world! Oh, I forgot! You can't, anyway, 'cause it's fastened underneath."

"So, then, there's nothing to be done but to sit here and wait till they think proper to come and finish me," said the young man, rising and walking up and down the room—"a mighty pleasant prospect, upon my word! I might as well deliver my last will and testament, verily at once, to this queer little damsel, and then devote the remainder of the time to preparing for heaven, or—the other place! I say, my little friend, I wonder they are so imprudent as to allow you to know about these blood-chilling things, or to be in the room with them while they are plotting their hellish designs!"

"Well, they wouldn't either; only the last time the man screamed out, and I heard him and came in. It was in this room, too," said the child, sinking her voice to a whisper, and casting a terrified glance around; "and he was on that bed, and old Grizzle had him by the hands, and Blaize by the feet; and they kept him down, and his face and neck were all covered with blood, and he screamed out—oh, dreadfully!—until Kit held the pillow over his face, and when he took it away, he was as still—oh, as still as any thing! And then—and Oriole's voice sunk lower and lower, and she shivered convulsively—they put him down cellar, and he's been there ever since!"

A slight shudder passed through the form of the young stranger, and a look of horror and loathing swept over his fine face.

"Heavens above! what a sight for a child? What a sight for any one in a Christian country? What did they say to you for coming, my dear child?"

"Oh! Blaize would have killed me, only she wouldn't let him; but she beat me dreadfully," said Oriole, wining at the recollection. "And she said if ever I told any one, she would put me down cellar with him. I never did tell any one, either, till you came; and I shouldn't have told you, only they were going to put you down cellar too. Don't you tell her, mind—you said you wouldn't, you know?"

"Neither shall I—don't fear. And so, as you know of the other murder, they didn't mind your being in the room and hearing of this?"

"No," said Oriole; "they thought I would not tell, you know, 'cause it's a good long while since then, and I never did tell nobody."

"And why is it that I am to be 'put down cellar,' as you call it, since they have let others escape?"

"Oh! 'cause you've got money—old Grizzle says so—and a nice watch and lots of things; and she wants 'em. If I was you, I'd give them to her, and tell her I wouldn't tell anybody. They won't be any good to you, you know, if you are killed."

"That's true enough," said the young man, with a momentary smile. "But supposing I neither let them kill me, nor give them the watch—eh? How would that be, Orrie? If it comes to killing, I rather fancy they will find two can play at that game."

"But there's four of them, and you can't kill four," said Orrie, with a puzzled look.

"Large odds; but I've fought against as many before now. I didn't live in a certain green island of the west, as old-de-camp to His Grace the Lord Lieutenant for three years, without getting into a shindy now and then—thank fortune!" said the young Englishman, speaking more to himself than Orrie.

"And so you're going to kill them?" said Orrie, with simplicity.

"I shall make the attempt, my young friend; and if I fail—why there will only be a scapegrace the less in the world. But see here, my good little girl," he said, stopping before her, and lifting the tangled hair off her small, gipsyish face, "what will they say to you, when they find you here? They will half kill you, won't they?"

"Oh, yes! I forgot," said the child, starting up in terror. "I must go. I can't stay, you know. Old Grizzle, no doubt, thinks I have gone to bed; and if she were to catch me here, she—"

"Would put you down cellar," said the young man, with a smile.

"Yes," said Orrie, moving quickly toward the door.

But at that instant, a sudden noise, startling enough, arrested her steps, and sent her young blood curdling to her heart.

It was the hushed sound of footsteps below, and a sudden noise, as if some one had stumbled, followed by a fierce, suppressed oath; and then there was an instant's death-like silence.

As if frozen where she stood, the child, Orrie, paused, her great black eyes wild and dilating, her lips springing, white and quivering, apart, her small hands involuntarily clenching until the sharp nails sunk in the quivering flesh, her very breathing suspended, until it became painful to listen for its

return. Not the faintest sound escaped her; she stood as if turned to stone.

Making a hasty motion for her to be silent, the young man seized a pistol in either hand, and fixed his eyes steadily on the trap-door, his handsome face set stern and resolute, his eye bright, bold and dauntless, his pulse calm and steady.

There seemed a momentary pause below, in which nothing was to be heard but the beating and dashing of the storm without; and then there came the near sound of bolts cautiously withdrawing beneath.

The young stranger grasped his pistol tighter, and sighted it, with deadly accuracy for the trap. One moment more, and one at least of these midnight assassins would have got his due; but Fate, or Providence, or the brave young Englishman's guardian angel willed it otherwise; for, at that moment, in the very crisis of affairs, a most unlooked-for interruption occurred.

A loud and violent knock—a knock that shook the whole house from attic to cellar—resounded on the front door.

There was a quick, startled ejaculation from below, and the bolt was hurriedly shot back.

A faint, repressed cry broke from the lips of Orrie; and the young man lowered his weapon, and looked at her in wonder.

Again the knock was repeated, louder and longer than before, until the house echoed and reverberated with the thundering noise.

The stranger bent his head and listened intently; and, with hearing sharpened by excitement, heard the sound of retreating feet below; and then, for an instant or two, all was perfectly still.

But only for an instant; then the belated wayfarer without, whoever it might be, evidently determined to be heard if the door held out, raised another uproarious knock, accompanied by a shout that could be even heard in that upper room:

"Hallo! within there! Open the door—will you?—and don't keep a fellow here in the storm all night!"

"Oh, it's Frank De Vere—it's Frank De Vere!" said Orrie, springing forward with a joyful cry. "That's him, I know. Nobody else ever makes such a noise as he does. Oh, you're all safe now—just as safe as can be! They won't touch you while Frank De Vere stays!"

"Well, it's pleasant to know even that. But who is Frank De Vere? Not one of the De Veres of Fontelle?"

"Yes; he comes from Fontelle—a beautiful place. Oh, I'm so glad!" exclaimed Orrie.

"Upon my life, I have had a night of it!" said the young man, flinging himself into a chair, and pushing back carelessly his hair, brown hair. "First horsewhipping an insolent Yankee, and encountering a real fairy prince for beauty, and then falling into the hands of the Philistines; and first meeting a witch, and then this little kelpie; and, when about to be assassinated in cold blood, Mr. Frank De Vere thinks proper to come along at the eleventh hour and save my life. For my honor, it's exactly like a scene in a play, where everybody is saved in the most unexpected way, just when the knife is at their throat, by everybody else. Well, luck's every thing—no mistake about it, as I have abundantly proved by all my narrow escapes by flood and field for the last four-and-twenty years. What, Flibbertigibbet! off, are you? Where away now?"

"I'm going down to see Frank," said Oriole.

"Oh, you do—do you? What a beautiful virtue Frankness is to be sure, and how nicely girls get over it, once they are emancipated from pantalettes. I don't know but what it would be right for me to go and see Frank, too. Solitude's a very fine thing in its way; but there is such a possibility as having too much of a good thing; and this is not exactly the place where one would fancy their own thoughts for companions either, right over the grave of a murdered man. Who knows but I may discover in Frank a cousin of mine, too? It's worth going to see about at all events. So here goes!"

He rose, as he spoke, and passed from the room—Orrie having already gone.

As he descended the stairs, he heard somebody blustering in like the god of the wind; and then a cheery, boyish voice exclaiming, as its owner stamped and shook the rain off himself:

"Blow ye winds, and crack your cheeks! Poor Frank's a-cold! I say, Mother Grizzle, why didn't you let me in when I knocked first, and not keep me here in the rain till I'm a sight to see, not to hear of?"

What with mud and rain, I'm a picture to look at—ain't I? Talk about drowned rats! If you want to see one, just cast your eyes on me, my friends! Hallo, little black-eyes! How d'ye do? No; don't come near me! I'm a living cataract—worse than Undine's uncle, and he was a cross between a man and a river! But I forgot you don't know German; so it's not likely you ever heard of the gent. Get us something to eat, Grizzle. Haven't had a blessed mouthful since early morning, as I'm a sinner!

Where's Kit, and Blaize, and Old Till these times?"

"They ain't home," said the voice of the woman, Grizzle, in surly tones, as she stiffly moved through the room. "Orrie, get out of that, and go to bed. You ought to have been there long ago."

"I'd rather sit up," said Orrie, sharply. "Oh, let little bright-eyes stay," said the new-comer. "I like to look at her. Many customers stopped here lately, Grizzle?"

"No," said Grizzle, curtly. "Who'd stop here when they could go on?"

"Ah, that's true enough!" said the boy; "it's not the most enchanting-looking bower of repose I ever saw, and the public generally are not likely to be captivated by it. But a storm-stayed traveler might drop in now and then—on the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread."

"How did you come to be caught in the storm at this hour of the night, Master Frank?" said the woman, rattling dishes on the table.

"Well, I am on my way home from New York; and, as I was in a hurry, I thought the storm wouldn't amount to much, and that I could ride through it, until I got to Fontelle; but I found my mistake before long, and would have stopped at the Mermaid all night, only I knew it would be impossible to awake old Bob Rowlie; so I just rode on till I came here. And here I am—what's left of me, I mean; for I got more than half-washed away by the rain!"

"What took you to New York now?" said the woman. "There, sit down, and take your supper, if you want it."

"Oh, Jack sent me, of course. I'm ordered about, up there, as if I wasn't of the slightest consequence to anybody. Deuce take Jack, I say!" exclaimed Master Frank, with his mouth full.

"Amen!" said a voice, that made the woman start and the youth jump up from his chair.

And the next moment the young stranger pushed open the door at the foot of the stairs, and coolly walked in.

The keen, piercing, hawk-like eye of the woman was bent upon him for an instant; but his face expressed nothing but its usual careless *and froid* as he met her gaze, and then glanced, with easy indifference, at Master Frank—a bright-eyed, fair-haired, fresh-faced lad of sixteen or eighteen.

"The noise at the door aroused me," he said, as if in explanation, "and not feeling like sleeping, and my fire having gone out, I thought I would come down here. I hope I have not startled you."

Started me? said the youth, slowly turning to his former occupation, "you've scared me out of a year's growth—shattered my nervous system all to smash!"

"Very sorry to hear it," said the stranger, in his careless way; "but your prayer for Jack, whoever he may be, seemed so heartfelt that, as a pious Christian—which I flatter myself I am—I could not help responding to it. I think I heard you mention Fontelle as I came down-stairs. Do you know the family there?"

"Well, I should think I did—rather," said Frank, with emphasis; "more especially as I generally pitch my tent there myself when I'm at home."

"What, are you a De Vere?"

"Well, I'm commonly called that, for want of a better name I suppose. But, what do you know about the De Veres?" continued Master Frank.

"Well, I believe I claim kindred with the family," said the careless stranger. "My name is Disbrowe, the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe, more commonly known as Captain Disbrowe, of His Most Gracious Majesty's Horse Guards."

"Hey!" said Master Frank, dropping his knife and fork, and staring at the young and handsome gentleman, "it ain't possible, is it?"

The stranger smiled, and bowed slightly. "And you're the Honorable Alfred Disbrowe, brother of Lord Earncliffe?" exclaimed the boy.

"And nephew of Robert De Vere, Esq., of Fontelle? Yes, I have that honor," said the stranger.

Up sprang Frank from his seat; and, darting over, he caught the young Englishman's hand and shook it heartily, saying, with a delighted shout:

"Hoory! if this ain't an uncommon streak of good luck, my name's not Frank! Good gracious! just to think of it! Why, it's the most unexpected and knock-down rencontre that ever anybody heard of since they were born!" said Frank, shaking the Honorable Alfred's hand, as if it had been a pump-handle, in his surprise and delight.

## CHAPTER IV.

## FONTELLE.

It was a sandy level where a road crossed the old and lone house. Far as the eye could measure, on the green back of the wood, The smoke lay always low and lazily. But from the rock, rough-grained and icy-crowned, Some little flowers from out some cleft will rise, And in this quiet land my love I found, With all their soft light sleeping in her eyes." —ALICE CARV.

The young Englishman glanced toward

his slightly uncourteous hostess, to see what effect this announcement had on her; and saw her standing, looking steadily into the fire, with the strangest expression of mingled triumph, delight and exultation, added to another inexplicable look—as if a demoniacal prospect of some sort had suddenly been opened before her. Her evil face had so strange a fascination for him at that moment, that, unheeding Frank De Vere's boisterous greeting, he kept his eyes on her, and asked:

"What picture do you see in the fire, my worthy hostess, that seems so strongly to rivet your attention?"

She looked up, and met his gaze with a dark and most sinister smile.

"One that you will see, I hope—I believe—some day, in real life, young sir," she replied, transfixing him with her basilisk eyes.

"Indeed! and what may it be, pray?"

"I saw," said the woman, pointing to the glowing coals, "a pit there, so black, so bottomless, that, if it opened visibly before you now, you would shrink and recoil from it in horror."

"Possible!" said the young man, in his careless tone. "Well, and what of it? Did you see nothing else?"

"You—you were at the bottom of it?"

"Oh, was I? And you hope that it may come true some day—do you? Of course I am mightily obliged to you; but, at the same time, I'd rather be excused."

"But you were not alone," persisted the woman, as if he had not spoken.

"Indeed? Well, it is pleasant to know even that. Who had the atrocious taste to accompany me there, my dear madam?"

"I saw," said the old woman, folding her arms, and looking full in his careless, handsome face with her sinister smile, "I saw some one falling down, and down, and down into that dark and loathsome gulf; and lie, fallen and degraded in their scornful pride, in the very slime at your feet, spurned alike by God and man, and that one was—"

"Well," said the young man, startled a little from his nonchalant manner by the suppressed passion that throbbled like a rising tide in her face and voice.

"Jack De Vere!" she said, raising her voice almost to a shriek, as, with a last malignant glance, she turned to leave the room.

"Don't mind her, Captain Disbrowe!" exclaimed Frank, indignantly; "she's crazy one-half her time, and not very sensible the rest. Nobody minds what old Grizzle Howlet says."

"Who is this Jack De Vere, on whose destiny I am to have so dismal an effect?" inquired the soldier, resuming his indifferent manner.

"Oh, a cousin of ours, of course; one of the De Veres of Fontelle."

"Is he at Fontelle now?"

Frank nodded and laughed, and the laugh was shrilly echoed by the elfish sprite, Orrie, who still crouched in the chimney corner.

"Then I shall see him to-morrow," said Orrie, still laughing, and seemingly immensely tickled by some inward feeling.

"What are you laughing at?" said Captain Disbrowe, with a puzzled look.

Frank opened his mouth to protest he never was more serious in his life, but in the effort another roar escaped him.

"Oh, Jack sent me, of course. I'm ordered about, up there, as if I wasn't of the slightest consequence to anybody. Deuce take Jack, I say!" exclaimed Master Frank, with his mouth full.

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some bright Hollow Eve night, and captured her."

"Shouldn't wonder. I should like to know something more of her, though."

"Why, you haven't fallen in love with her, have you?" said Frank.

"Not exactly," said Captain Disbrowe, with a slight laugh. "I feel an interest in the child, though, on account of a little service she did me this evening, and because I think something might be made of her, yet, let her go. And now, about Fontelle. I suppose they received Earncliffe's letter?"

"Saying you were coming to pay us a visit—yes," said the boy. "I heard Jack and Gus talking about it, and wondering what sort of an individual you would turn out to be."

"Gus?"

"Why, yes—Oh, I forgot you didn't know. I mean cousin Augusta—Lady Augusta De Vere, if you please."

"Lady Augusta? I thought you had no titles over here."

"Haven't we? That's all you know about it, then. Why, every second man you meet is a colonel, and a general, and a squire, and lots of other things. Uncle Rob's a squire—Squire De Vere, you know. But they used to call her Lady Augusta when she was a little girl—she was such a proud, haughty little duchess; and so the name's stuck to her ever since."

"She wouldn't be a De Vere if she was not proud," said Disbrowe, quietly.

"Oh, wouldn't she? Well, they call me a De Vere, and anybody that says I'm proud—why, I say they're mistaken, to draw it mild. To be sure, it's not my name; but that's neither here nor there, nor anywhere else, for that matter."

"Not your name?" said Disbrowe, with a stare.

"No, sir!" said Master Frank, emphatically. "My name's Stubbs—but tell it, not in Gath. You see, the way of it was, my mother and Squire De Vere's wife were sisters; and when father and mother died, and I went to live at Fontelle, everybody took to calling me De Vere. I was a little shaver, then; and the name's stuck to me ever since, until, sometimes, I don't feel quite sure but what I am a De Vere, after all. It's an awful falling off to come down from that pinnacle of high-and-mightydom to plain, unromantic, unvarnished Stubbs; but it's the hard, substantial truth, and there's no dodging it."

Captain Disbrowe stroked his mustache, and laughed at Frank's rueful face.

"What's in a name?" as Juliet says. 'A rose, you know, by any other name would smell as sweet.'

"I don't believe it. Call it a cabbage, for instance, and how would it sound? If you read in a novel, now, that a chap presented his lady-love with a cabbage, as an emblem of his affection, what would you say? Why, that he was a cabbage-head himself. Juliet be hanged!" said Frank, in a tone of disgust. "She was in love, and couldn't be expected to be in her proper senses. There's a great deal in a name. Her lover was Romeo Montague. If he had been Romeo Stubbs, I wonder how she would have liked it?"

"Well, as I never had the honor of the young lady's acquaintance, I can not take it upon myself to answer that question. And so Lady Augusta, and uncle Rob, and cousin Jack, constitute the family at Fontelle Hall?"

"Yes," said Frank, slowly, and looking in the fire; "they do, rather, when I'm not there; and I'm a host in myself. I hope you intend making us a long visit, Captain Disbrowe?"

"Perhaps—if you don't tire of me and turn me out."

"I'll risk that! Jack will like you, I know, and Jack's word is law at Fontelle. By the way, though, cousin Alfred—I suppose I may call you that—that first put it into your head to honor us with a visit, anyway?"

"Pon my honor, that's a puzzle, my young friend. I don't even know how I ever discovered there was such a place as America in existence. Oh, come to think of it, Ned Howard, of the Guards, told me. He did a little fighting here, once upon a time; and as I got tired of longing about the Serpentine, and making love to Lady Jane and Lady Marys, I thought I would try the Hudson, by way of a change. And so Earncliffe informed me I had a half-uncle, or something, here, and wrote to him to let him know what a nice youth I was, and to warn him to treat me tenderly; and I obtained unlimited leave of absence, and came, and saw, and—no—yes, I did, though I—I conquered an insolent fellow I met at the Mermald Inn."

"How was that? Who was he?"

"Not acquainted with the gentleman. He was a short, stout, red-haired, red-whiskered individual, with an unpleasant, not to say ferocious, expression of countenance, and an air generally that looked like a cross between a sailor and a hangman."

"Why, it must have been Old Nick. Oh, land of hope and blessed promise! If it was him, you had better look out for squalls."

"Ah! He was ugly enough to be Old Nick, or any thing else you like; but I was not aware his Satanic Majesty took visible shape and sported a tarpaubin hat here in these United States."

"Oh, I mean old Nick Tempest. What did you do to him?"

"Gave him a cut of my horsewhip in the face, by way of a slight hint to be more polite to strangers in future."

"Which?" said Frank, thrusting his hands in his pockets, and indulging in a long, wailing whistle. "Well, then, let me tell you, you have made an inveterate and deadly enemy for life. That fellow's worse than a Corsican—he never forgives an injury."

"Well, there's not much love lost, that's one comfort. Who is he, anyway?"

"Oh! the captain of a schooner, and, they say, a buccaneer," said the boy, lowering his voice. "He has been seen cruising round the coast, and it is more than suspected that his deeds are evil. But it won't do to speak of that subject here."

"And why not?"

"Oh, well, he's thick with old Grizzle, and hand-and-glove with her two precious sons. 'Birds of a feather,' you know, and so on. A sweet set, the whole of 'em!"

"I wonder the authorities don't look after him?"

"The authorities!" said Frank, contemptuously. "With his fast-sailing clipper, he can snap his fingers in the faces of every mother's son of them, and he's wide awake, I tell you. Catch a weasel asleep, indeed! But I feel sleepy, and will seek a

little virtuous repose in the arms of Morpheus, if you have no objection."

"Not in the least, and I'll copy the example of the 'wise virgins' in the parable, and watch."

"Why don't you take a snooze yourself?" said Frank, settling himself in his chair, thrusting both hands in his coat-pockets, and putting on a resolute expression that bespoke his unflinching determination to go asleep, in spite of all obstacles.

"For certain, good reasons, that I will tell you to-morrow, which, if I don't mistake, is already growing gray in the east. Asleep so soon?" said the young man, glancing at Frank, who had dropped off almost instantly. "I wonder if he knew as much as I do about this house, whether he would sleep so easily? Where has the old Jezebel spirited off the men to, I should like to know?"

Drawing closer to the fire, Captain Disbrowe set himself to watch until morning; but, insensibly overcome by drowsiness and fatigue, he dropped fast asleep in ten minutes, and slept soundly—so soundly that he did not, two hours later, hear the door opened, nor the noiseless entrance of old Grizzle Howlet. Softly she crossed the room on tip-toe, and bent over him, and gazed intently as he lay with his head resting easily on his arm, and his handsome face plainly revealed in the gray morning light. Lightly she lifted the clustering waves of his bright brown hair from his forehead, and peered closer and closer in his face—the old sinister smile gradually breaking over her lips. Did she read in that fine and aristocratic-looking countenance a tale of haughty pride, but slightly veiled under the careless levity of his waking manner—a tale of dauntless daring and high ambition, that would spurn every obstacle as so many worms in his path, until the goal of his hopes were won? Something of that she must have read, if she were skilled in reading the 'human face divine'—for all were legible in that handsome face in its repose.

Suddenly he moved, restlessly, and murmured something in his sleep. The woman bent down to hear, but she could only catch the words: "When I come back, Norma."

"When you come back, Norma?" said Grizzle, rising, with her evil smile, and looking down upon the sleeper. "Will you ever come back to Norma, whoever she may be? Oh, Jack De Vere! God grant the day may soon come when I can see your high pride laid low, and your haughty head under the heel of this gay, proud Englishman, with his fair, young face and scornful heart—and may Heaven send the day soon when I can repay you a thousandfold for all your taunts, and gibes, and mockery!"

She struck her clenched hand on her breast, as if she could have beaten down a lion, and her face was livid with the raging passion throbbing in it, yet forcibly held back.

"Hallo! old Mother Hubbard! what are you up to now?" said the voice of Frank, as he got up, suddenly, with a yawn, and shook himself. "Hurry up breakfast—will you? I shall have to make tracks for Fontelle in double-quick time this morning, or Jack will be in my wool. Let's have a look at the weather," said he, going to the window and looking out, while old Grizzle silently busied herself in kindling a fire.

"Well, what is your opinion of the weather, my good cousin?" said Captain Disbrowe, awakened by his voice. "Is it snow, rain, hail, or lightning, or a mixture of all?"

"None of 'em," said Frank; "going to be a splendid day, after the storm. The weather here in New Jersey, you see," continued Frank, with a touch of philosophy, "is uncommonly like the female sex; mostly always contrary, and doing what nobody expects it to—always smiles one minute, and all smiles the next. That's the way with you lovely women, ain't it, Grizzle?" said Master Frank, winking at Disbrowe, to intimate that the latter part of his speech might be considered playfully ironical.

Grizzle favored him with a glance of withering contempt, and went steadily and silently on, preparing breakfast, which was soon ready, and sooner dispatched. Then little Orrie brought round their horse, while the young Englishman settled his bill with the hostess.

"And now, madam," he said, fixing his eyes keenly and significantly on her face, "before I bid you good-morning, allow me to thank you for your and your three friends' kind intentions toward me last night; and to advise you, when you next hold a secret conference round the fire, to be sure the door at the foot of the stairs is shut. Good-morning, madam. And with a slight and peculiarly graceful bow and smile, he passed from the house. Not a muscle of the woman's face moved, not the slightest start or sign of guilt did she betray, but with a muttered "Humph!" she folded her arms and looked after them until they were out of sight.

"What did you mean by that?" said Frank, as they rode rapidly along.

"Never mind, now," said Disbrowe; "I shall tell you all about it some other time, for talking at this sharp pace I don't admire."

A rapid ride of nearly five hours, through forest paths and muddy roads—considerably different from what the same route is to-day—brought them, at last, to their journey's end.

"Why didn't you take the shorter way, over the mountains?" Disbrowe asked.

"Oh! well, for various reasons—the first and chief of which is, that I would rather not break my neck just yet, if the public generally don't object. Mountain gorges, and chasms, and torrents, and steep, slippery paths, where a single false step would pitch you to the bottom—come in a twinkling, are all very pleasant to read about, but in real life I'd just as soon steer clear of them. Jack always takes the dare-devil in me to try it, I must confess; and, what's more, I ain't at all ambitious to have, either."

"This Jack appears to be quite a hero, in his way, and I feel quite anxious to know him," said Disbrowe.

Again Frank laughed—a peculiar, meaning laugh.

"Oh, I rather guess you and Jack will pull pretty well together, if you are only moderately careful and mind your eye! But there's Fontelle—is it any thing like your English home?"

Disbrowe looked, and saw a large, irregular, cumbrous-looking old mansion of gray stone, that seemed to have been built at different periods, with two wings—the one at the north heavy and gloomy, and fashioned after some antique style; while the southern one seemed of more modern date and

construction, lighter, airier, and more elegant. Extensive and handsome grounds surrounded it, and a long, winding avenue of tall maples led up to the front door. It was a fine old mansion, strongly resembling the old manors so common in England.

"As he named it after Fontelle Park, in England," said Frank, "he had it built, you see, to resemble it as much as possible. Does it really look like the old English house of the De Veres?"

"Very much," said Captain Disbrowe, in evident pleasure; "very much, indeed. I only want the broad lawns, and glades, and the great park, and the deer, and the 'silver star' above the gate, and the gatekeeper's lodge. Do you know the 'silver star,' Master Frank?"

"Don't I?" said Frank. "Is there a day of my life I don't hear of the 'silver star' of the De Veres? Hasn't uncle Rob the family arms emblazoned in the drawing-room?—and doesn't the 'silver star' shine there from year's end to year's end, and never set? But, look here! if that isn't the very Jack you want to see! Jack! Jack! I say!" he called, raising his voice.

He galloped on, followed by Disbrowe, until, suddenly reining up, he exclaimed, in a voice full of quiet malice and delight:

"Jack, this is our English cousin. Captain Disbrowe, allow me to make you acquainted with Jack De Vere."

Captain Disbrowe looked up, and sat for a moment stock-still with surprise. Well he might! he was not the first who had been electrified by Jack De Vere!

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 87.)

## Florence's Reward.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"FLORENCE GENESTE! you don't actually pretend to say you are decided on this ridiculous measure? Of all whims, this is the wildest."

Very indignant was little Aunt Macy, and her plump bosom heaved anxiously and wrathfully under the three-cornered white handkerchief.

Her sewing—a ruffled apron, of finest dimity—had fallen from her hands in sheer amazement at the remark pretty Florence Geneste had made, and that called forth the astonishment betrayed in the opening paragraph.

Miss Geneste laughed at Aunt Macy's attitude and manner.

"Why, you dear, kind auntie, you surely do not expect that, because you and Uncle Hi are the most generous people in the world, that I can take advantage of that kindness any longer?"

"That's sheer nonsense, now, Flo! As if there was any credit to be attached to the fact that we have a half-dozen vacant bed-rooms, and room at table for twenty more."

"But there are many thanks that I never can speak, Aunt Macy, for your kindness since I have been homeless and an orphan. Two months, Aunt Macy, is a lengthy visit, and mine must come to an end."

There was sadness in her voice, and a pensive shadow in her sweet, girlish face.

"That would all do very well, Florence, if you would only go to your Uncle Moore's for another two months' visit—then back to me again. You know every door is open always to you, and every heart will welcome you, whenever and wherever you go."

The tears sprung to Florence's eyes.

"I know—you are so good"—then, dashing away the tears, she smiled sunnily.

"Really, now, Aunt Macy, this situation I have obtained is a good one. The work is exceedingly pleasant, the office large and handsome, and the pay remarkably good."

"But to be obliged to instruct all green learners, who come to buy or rent a sewing-machine! Such patience! such suavity! Oh! it will be the death of you!"

"I think not. Besides," and now Flo's voice lost its gay badinage, and the sad, shadowy gray came back to her eyes—"I must be constantly employed, mind and body, in order to drive away the memories that sometimes threaten to crush me, even yet."

Her lips quivered, and Aunt Macy's soft, sympathetic hand sought hers, and clasped it tightly.

"And, then, time has not yet cured the heart that Aubrey Hamilton so nearly broke when he deserted you, with all the trouble that came on you? Florence, I would not bestow a thought on such a lover—and a betrothed lover, too. Any man who would heartlessly leave a girl, just when fortune fled and parents were taken so suddenly away, is too great a villain to think about!"

Aunt Macy's bright, hazel eyes snapped under her gold-rimmed glasses, then softened as they noted how Florence was fighting to conceal her emotions.

"I think all I do love him so, auntie, that I fear I never can forget. Heartlessly as he has acted, I can only remember when I was all the world to him."

Aunt Macy looked wonderingly at this proudly humble, beautiful girl, whose heart, so hardly won by handsome Aubrey Hamilton, in palmy days, now refused to disown allegiance to its monarch, that had spurned it so.

Florence Geneste was a strange girl, Aunt Macy thought—strange, because she refused the homes that were almost crowded in her hands by loving, plying relatives; passing strange, in that she persisted in cherishing tender thoughts of the man whose desertion had stricken her more than the united deaths of her invalid parents.

Well, Florence was a peculiar person; and Aubrey Hamilton had stirred the very depths of her heart. She could not forget him. True, she had removed the ring from her finger that he had given her, and had torn up all his letters; but that was not much comfort to her. So she carried an aching heart wherever she went—all for the love of a lover who had left her when fortune took wings. She never had seen him since the night he kissed her on the front piazza. He had folded his arms around her, and drawn her sweet face down to his breast; she had blushed and gently remonstrated, but he kissed her over and over again, on cheek, brow and lips, calling her his own, his treasure.

That was the last she had seen of him; she had heard, quite casually, that Mr. Hamilton had passed a fortnight at Lake George, and was all devoted to a most charming young lady, who wore splendid diamonds, and had been known to say she never appeared in the same dress twice at a watering-place or summer resort. Well, Florence had forced herself to think, by

this time, that if Aubrey Hamilton preferred diamonds and a balance at his wife's banker's to the strong, proud, trustful love she had given him, so it must be. He would be happy, at any rate; and she—well, she would not die from the grief, because, if trouble killed, she must have died when the first shock came.

So, with all this on her young life to crush it down, Florence Geneste took her chair in the sewing-machine emporium, resolved to do her duty in whatever she attempted.

She knew duty brought its own reward; but she little dreamed the reward she was to receive.

A large, splendidly furnished front chamber, on the second floor of a mansion on Twenty-third street, it was; and, in a graceful attitude of fashionable indolence, Mrs. Bourdlemere lounged on the azure velvet lounge, novel in hand. She was unmistakably stylish, this woman of thirty-five, who quivered it in the exclusive circles in which she condescended to reign. A large, exquisitely-modeled woman, with languishing, almond-shaped eyes, over which the thick, bronze-gold lashes drooped so often, and with such guiltless beauty of effect. A vain, self-conceited woman you know her to be at the very first glance at the strikingly handsome face; unprincipled, too, you could see, in the droop of her mouth at the corners, and the peculiar way she had of moving her full, red lips.

Just now, as she lounged on the sofa, "Granville De Vigne" in hand, she seemed impatient at the delay of some one.

After a time, quick, firm, and, withal light footsteps came up the stairs, followed by a tap on the door, it, in turn, followed by the entrance of a gentleman.

Mrs. Bourdlemere looked up, a half-petulant smile on her face.

"It's too bad of you, Aubrey, to keep me waiting so long."

Josie Glenn, the bright-eyed brunette who was spending the summer with Minnie, bowed a cool, courteous greeting.

"Pardon me, aunt Evagene, but I was unavoidably detained. My late return from Liverpool seems to occasion such a host of welcomes on every side, that I can not—"

"Well, that is all very well, you know, but I am so disappointed that my machine has not come. I want you to go right down to the office and learn the reason."

Mr. Hamilton smiled at Mrs. Bourdlemere's vehement air.

"Certainly, if you wish, aunt. Broadway, I believe."

He leaned lazily back against the blue velvet easy-chair, that brought out to the finest advantage his fair complexion and thick, bronze-gold hair, very like Mrs. Bourdlemere's. He was handsome, without a doubt; handsome, without these drawbacks that so plainly marked his mother's sister. In lieu of Mrs. Bourdlemere's envious lassitude, there was about Aubrey Hamilton, an air of half-concealed dejection that, evidently, sat morbidly heavily upon him than usual that morning, for Mrs. Bourdlemere rallied him on it.

"Wearing the willow yet, Aubrey? You are a fool, and Florence Geneste is doubtless laughing in her sleeve when she thinks how she jilted you."

A dark frown gathered on his forehead.

"Don't speak so of Miss Geneste, Aunt Evagene. I will not allow myself to think harshly of her. As to her jilting me—she had a right to take her love from me, if she chose."

Mrs. Bourdlemere looked keenly at his knit brow and almost cross face, then laughed lightly.

"To be sure she had, and right well she has exercised her prerogative. You know I never could abide the sight of her, and since she so suddenly and unaccountably refused the offer of a quiet marriage in order that you might take her to England, I've simply hated her—the sly minx."

Mr. Hamilton arose, half angrily.

"We will not discuss Miss Geneste, if you please. What did you say was the number of the office?"

"I've forgotten, but you'll find her card in that upper short drawer."

She pointed to the dressing-bureau, and Hamilton walked over, little knowing what he would find.

He opened the drawer and began tumbling the contents about in a very man-like fashion, in search of the card, which, had he but looked, he would have seen lying at the top of a pile of papers, letters and tissue paper.

Suddenly he uttered a cry, and with a face flushed scarlet, confronted Mrs. Bourdlemere with a letter; a letter whose seal had been broken, and whose superscription was, "Miss Florence Geneste."

"Aunt Evagene! what does this mean?"

His intensely-excited voice made her start and look up, half-afrightedly, half-conscious in her guilt.

"Aubrey, it was for your own good—"

"It was, then. You were the means of all the trouble that has come upon me—yes, God help her! it must have been a bitter blow to her, when she thought me false because I went away so suddenly and left no word! And you refused to give her the letter I wrote and left you to mail!"

Aunt Evagene—where is my Florence?"

"How do I know? What do I care? Yes, I have saved you from marrying her, because—"

He threw the letter on the bureau and went out of the room, filled with mingled emotions that almost took away his breath. He hastened down to the street door, not pausing when he heard Mrs. Bourdlemere following him, asking him, in the coolest possible way, to see that the sewing-machine was sent at once.

He smiled grimly at the childish thought of refusing to do her errand.

So he went up to the agency, and on the side-walk met the agent, and delivered his message.

If he only had gone in—and met Florence, as she bent her graceful head over the flying needle!

"Miss Geneste, you will have to go to Twenty-third street to give some instructions. Mrs. Bourdlemere is the lady."

Bourdlemere; it was new to her, and she merely thought how French it sounded, as she put on her dainty little velvet hat and plush sacque.

She made a pretty picture as she tripped along Broadway, and many an eye turned in respectful admiration as she passed along. She was not long reaching the number on her card, and at the door was requested to follow the maid to the sitting-room—Mrs. Bourdlemere, on the second floor, front. It was vacant, and Florence walked up to the register to warm her chilled fingers—and stepped on a letter.

She picked it up, and an exclamation fell from her lips, that turned ashy pale as she saw the name on it was her own, in Aubrey Hamilton's hand-writing.

She almost tore it apart, in her nervous excitement; and read it through in dumb astonishment. Then, woman-like, sat down in one of the elegant chairs and began to cry.

Her bewilderment was extreme. This letter was certainly her property, but how came it there?

Mrs. Bourdlemere's step on the velvet-carpeted stairs was accompanied by a heavier one, whose footfall was strangely familiar to Florence.

Then she heard some one say, "I'll not interfere with the lesson, Aunt Evagene. I came back for that letter; and until I find Florence—"

And Aubrey Hamilton stood face to face with her!

Thus Florence Geneste's duty brought a peculiar and most exquisite reward in the full measure of love and happiness that was meted to her, then and there.

## The Widow from Boston.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

ONE summer day three gay girls stood in the garden of a handsome house, in a pleasant village, discussing, eagerly, some subject which appeared to give them great delight.

"Oh, it will be rare fun," cried Minnie Dacres, clapping her little dimpled hands. "I had rather take that conceited brother of mine down, than eat when I'm hungry."

"Tom does need taking down," said Kate Keiser, who was Minnie's cousin, "and we'll just teach him a lesson."

"You must be the widow, Kate," said Josie Glenn, the bright-eyed brunette who was spending the summer with Minnie. "Tom thinks you are going to Centerville, to-morrow, so he'll never suspect."

"And you mustn't forget your name, Kate, nor let your false hair drop off," said Minnie. "You must dress up in Josie's clothes, and we will go out to the Cross Roads after dinner; you must take the stage there and, make your entrance into town in full style."

"Tom is sure to be at Willis' when the stage comes, and you must give him a killing look, so he'll think you're smitten at first sight," said Josie.

"Oh! I'll do my part, never fear. Look, girls, Tom is coming. If he sees us all here he may suspect something."

So the plotters quickly separated, to renew their consultations in the safe shelter of Minnie's chamber.

Tom Dacres did have a fashion, as soon as the summer arrivals began, of displaying himself on the steps of Willis' Hotel whenever the stages came in. So there he was, as exquisite as possible, when the four o'clock train from Red Bank Ferry rattled up, and a little lady most stylishly attired, her face half-shaded by a black lace veil, got out, and as she did so, gave Tom a glimpse of a white hand, sparkling with diamonds.

Willis himself came out, and in pursuance of a letter he had received that very morning, welcomed the lady with great *impressment*, and conducted her into the house. She glanced around, and as her eye lit on Tom, followed the glance with a thrilling look which set his heart all of a flutter.

Presently Willis came bustling out, to attend to the lady's baggage, and Tom read the name on the trunks, "Mrs. Cameron, Liberty Square, Boston," and his heart sunk immediately, for if she was "Mrs." there was a "Mr." somewhere, and that killing glance meant nothing, after all.

So Tom sat at the supper-table and trifled moodily with his strawberries and cream, and took no notice of Josie and Minnie, rattling away, until Minnie said: "Oh, Tom, did you see the stage come in at four?"

"Yes," growled Tom.

"Oh, then, I wonder if you saw the rich young widow from Boston?"

"Widow!" thought Tom; and said, aloud, "There was a lady, and some trunks marked Boston!"

"Was the name on the trunks Cameron?" cried Minnie.

"Yes, or some thing like it," said Tom.

"Oh, then, it was like the lady Em Willis told us was coming. A young Boston widow, rich as cream,



Cameron found herself suddenly obliged to return to town, and would like to bid her dear friend, Mr. Dacres, a last farewell.

Upon which Tom was so distracted that he did just what the mischievous girls meant he should do—sat down and wrote her a frantic offer of his heart and hand, begging to be allowed to see her at once.

The "widow" sent back a graceful little note, declaring herself sensible of the honor Mr. Dacres did her, asking him to give her till evening to think it over, and then come to Willis' and receive her answer.

The state Tom was in that day baffles description, but he made out to exist until night, and then, entirely ignoring all such subliminal considerations, as supper, in all the glory of white kid gloves and curled mustache, he took his way to the hotel.

He found the fair widow's parlor vacant, but presently she came in, carrying Tom's last bouquet in one hand. He sprang forward, as she came in, blushing and drooping, and sunk gracefully on one knee, with extended hands.

"My adored one!" he exclaimed, "deign to grant me that little hand, for which I would dare so much!"

"Oh, Mr. Dacres!" simpered the false widow, "are you sure it is myself alone you love?"

"I swear it, by the eternal hills!" cried Tom, melodramatically.

"You are sure my large fortune does not influence you, dear Mr. Dacres?"

"No, no! If you were penniless and friendless, still I hear me swear, most bewitching widow!"

"Oh, then, I need not fear to reveal myself. You will still love me?"

"Yes—yes! lovely one! Only promise to be mine!"

"But, first, I must make you a revelation, my dear friend—"

"Ah, let me hear it, then. Whatever it be it can not alter my bliss," cried Tom, still on his knees.

"Behold, then!"

The widow lifted her white hands and raised from her lovely head the blonde tresses which Tom had admired, slightly changed the expression of her mouth, and spoke, in her natural tone, a word or so, and Tom sprang to his feet, with a bound and a cry of amazement, as he recognized his mischievous cousin, Kate Keiser!

While he stared in bewildered horror, a ringing laugh pealed through the room, and from behind the open window-curtains came Minnie and Josie, and advanced to the side of their fellow-conspirator.

"Well, Tom, how do you like the widow from Boston?" asked Minnie.

But poor Tom, perceiving how he had been victimized, stayed for no questions. With one bound he caught his hat, and, with another, he reached the door; and, ever after, when the girls—whom he never forgave—wanted to take down any of Tom's conceits, they only had to ask him if he remembered the Widow from Boston.

## The Ocean Girl:

### THE BOY BUCCANEER.

BY LAFAYETTE LAFOREST,  
AUTHOR OF "CRUISER CRUISE," ETC., ETC.

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

##### THE HUNT.

It was with a deadly and sickly sensation at the heart that Edward Drake listened to the words of these ruffians. Had he been alone, he would not have cared so much; but that Loo should run the risk of falling into the hands of such monstrous caricatures of humanity, excited in his mind the liveliest feelings of disgust and fear.

To him she was a sacred charge, and should her father never survive the sufferings he endured on that inhospitable coast, he would be only too glad to devote his whole existence to her, in any situation in life in which he might be placed. Even if condemned to remain all their lives on that island, he would not murmur, considering, as he did, the terrible dangers and sufferings from which they had escaped.

What was to be done? It was quite certain that, with two such cunning and resolute ruffians at their heels, they could not expect to remain concealed in the small cavern in the rocks, as they would be indefatigable in their search. A move must be made at once.

While these thoughts were slowly passing through his head, he did not attempt to move. He was listening all the time to the conversation of the pair of buccaneers, in the hope that something they might say would aid him in his plans to escape. He was disappointed, however. Their talk was of their misdeeds and crimes, of which they boasted with that gusto and glee which appertain only to lost humanity. Ordinary criminals, when overcome by drink, or in moments of excitement, may boast of their own wickedness; but, in the calm, still hours, when conscience pricks, they know themselves to be the rogues and fools they really are.

Fools, because a life of dishonesty is the hardest and most perilous that any man can follow.

By degrees the bandits lay down, and, ere the hour of midnight, they slept as men do who have indulged in potent doses of spirituous liquors.

Ned Drake now rose, and stole into the camp. Had he been older and less generous, his two ferocious persecutors would have been at his mercy. One blow of a knife would have settled the question. But, excusable as the act might have been, such a thought never entered the head of our young hero.

His intentions were very different. Beside a tall tree that overshadowed a portion of the camp, he had noticed that the arms were piled, numerous large powder-horns being also hung from the branches. Stepping lightly and cautiously between the sleepers, he soon reached the spot, and, without the slightest hesitation, he appropriated one gun, two large powder-horns and a bag of bullets.

Having made sure of these, he would not risk recrossing the camp. He determined to make a round, especially as, being loaded, he could not, if discovered, have been active enough in his movements.

As he stepped from under the trees, he noticed a slight movement on the other side.

It was Captain Gantling, who, being unable to sleep, had come out into the open air to smoke.

Ned Drake stood, inadvertently, in the full light of a bright and glorious moon,

which, motionless as he was, gave him, if not a ghostly, at least a statuesque appearance. As the captain's face was turned full toward him, he was afraid to move. Hoping he would soon turn away, he moved not a muscle.

"Away, offspring of the fiend!" suddenly exclaimed the pirate. "Why haunt me thus? Thou canst not say I slew thee. Away, accursed spirit—away!" and as he spoke, he advanced menacingly.

Several of the buccaneers leaped to their feet, and crowded round their chief. Among them were Grunn and Jacobs, who eagerly inquired what had happened.

"I saw him—there! standing still in the moonlight, motionless as a statue, and now he is gone!"

"'Tis the fever, sir," said the big buccaneer, who hardly believed that Ned would enter their camp willingly. "You are not quite yourself."

"'Tis true, I have been ill; and illness breeds strange fancies. Go, rest; I will watch awhile."

And he did; but, no further interruption taking place, he at last retired, to seek that rest which is soothing to the body as well as to the mind.

When, however, the discovery was made that a gun and two powder-horns and shot-pouches had been abstracted, all doubt was at an end, and Gantling himself was forced to assent to the astounding belief of Ned Drake being on the island. This discovery did more to restore him to an ordinary frame of mind than all the reasoning of his comrades, and all the medicine he had been trying.

Meanwhile, Ned Drake had made the best of his way back to the cavern, which, however, promised no further security, now that his presence was known. Such men as Grunn and Jacobs have all the instincts of the hound, while, the island being small, it could, by perseverance, be searched in a very moderate space of time.

There was, however, no immediate danger. Ned Drake had examined the neighborhood pretty accurately, and had secured a path by which to retreat, at the first alarm. It led down a narrow ravine to a mangrove swamp, dark, damp, and infested by water-snakes—a hideous class of reptile, but preferable to those who were on their track.

They reposed until after daybreak; and then, letting loose the goats with reluctance, they peered out upon the stony track by which their enemies were likely to come.

But though they heard occasional shots in distant parts of the island, no one came their way during that day.

This was, they knew, only a respite. Fortunately, the goats, which were very tame, would not leave them; so that they had their usual supply of milk, which, in the absence of water, was essential to their existence.

Long and weary were the hours of that watch. Both, usually so talkative and ready to amuse each other, were now moody and silent. They looked with horror to the probability of their capture by the ruffian crew, who, though on ordinary occasions obedient to their commander, took occasional lawless fits into their heads, and then mischief was sure to ensue.

All day they sat, retreating to their cavern only when night fell. They made up a small fire, and resumed their seats. Neither had any consolation to give—why, then, talk?

Presently a sudden bleating of the goats was heard, and Ned crept slowly out, satisfied that they had been startled.

The night was dark. The moon had not yet risen, but there was that baffling light which is so common in the tropics, by which he clearly saw two figures at no great distance, on the summit of a ridge, looking about them.

They were Grunn and Jacobs, who were now on the track, and had succeeded in finding some sign by which to trace the fugitives.

They appeared to be making straight for the cavern. No time was to be lost. Putting his finger on her lips, he took Loo by the hand, and crept up the side of the rock, satisfied that the smell of fire would betray the secret of the cavern. The way they had chosen was rude and difficult, but any thing was better than falling into the hands of these atrocious miscreants.

In the eyes of Ned Drake, life was too sacred to be taken unnecessarily, but he resolved to use his firearms, rather than be captured. With this determination he loaded the guns carefully.

They were now on the edge of a swamp, quite a quarter of a mile from the cavern.

A loud shout proclaimed that the ruffians had found their late place of concealment, and Ned Drake shuddered as he reflected on the position they would now have been in, if they had trusted to the cavern. But no time was to be lost.

The swamp was filled with mangrove trees, which grew out of the murky fen in all sorts of shapes, the roots invariably above the water. However, there was no choice but to clamber through them. The buccaneers were already scouring the rocky way by which they had come, but had not succeeded in discovering them.

The trees were so close together that their journey was performed with comparative ease, though the fatigue was great. At length they reached a small mound, where Ned Drake halted with the intention of passing the night.

Under the deep shadows of the trees, in the gloom of that strange spot, the young people seated themselves, with an earnest prayer to Heaven for protection and succor.

Then, in the earnest hope that they were safe, both slept; for youth can not easily resist the imperious claims of nature.

It was morning when they awoke, though no sun penetrated to that secluded nook.

Hark! what sound is that? It is the cautious-whispered tones of the two pirates. They were close to them, and there was no choice but to make an open run for it. Whispering to Loo to come, the agile boy leaped from root to root, helping her as he did so.

With a volley of fierce oaths and exclamations, the bandits ordered them to stop. The pirates, however, were not so lithe and youthful, so that the fugitives were able to keep ahead of them without much difficulty. Still, concealment was now idle, and some other course of action had to be adopted.

Ned Drake, in this fearful emergency, had to decide at once.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEPARTURE.

This work of refitting continued rapidly. The buccaneers, despite their fondness for

revels, were too fond of money and the society of the dashing beauties of the isles, to waste much time. Every hour of daylight was therefore taken advantage of.

Captain Gantling interfered but little. He was really ill, and the fever that heated his blood filled his brain with many and strange hallucinations. He believed himself haunted by the spirit of the boy, and he regarded the hunt by Grunn and Jacobs as an idle act of folly.

How could a boy whom he had left safe on board an East Indian, be on that desert island, where none but whalers and buccaneers were in the habit of calling?

It was thousands of miles out of the track of the transport.

He was thinking deeply over the matter as he walked up and down before his hut. All the rest were busy, and the sound of hammers was heard, mingled with the songs of the light-hearted workers.

Sailors are the most careless of human beings, and go to work as readily as to fight, dance, or spend money.

Suddenly a loud commotion was heard in the thicket, and then two shots from a distance.

All ceased working: while Captain Gantling turned round, and gazed wildly at the thicket, from which, next instant, two boys issued, one of whom he at once recognized to be Ned Drake.

"Am I awake, or is this some vision come to haunt me?"

"Captain Gantling, I have reasons to fear you, perhaps to hate you; but I prefer trusting to your clemency, rather than be murdered by that ruffian, Grunn."

"It is the boy," gasped the buccaneer. "In the foul fiend's name, how came you here? And who is this lad?"

"We are, I fear, all that remains of the Indian, replied the youth, evasively. "Ah, has my enemy indeed perished? How happened it?"

"I will tell you presently, captain. Here comes the bloodhound."

"Fear nothing; go inside the hut. So, Grunn, you've hunted them up?" said the captain.

"Yes; and now I mean to do for the young whelp! Come out of that!"

"The boy is mine; and shall never be hurt while I remain in authority!" replied the captain, coldly.

"This is madness—folly! The men won't stand it!" cried Grunn, in a furious voice.

"They will have to stand it!" continued Gantling, as he caught up a musket, "this is my remedy for mutiny!" and he pointed the gun directly at the heart of the tall boy.

Grunn muttered some indistinct threat, and turned away to foment, in secret, the mutinous band which he headed; and which were now in a considerable minority.

From that moment no allusion was made by Ned Drake or Gantling to any cause of enmity between them. The young buccaneer knew how frail was his term of life, and how, for Loo's sake, he must keep friends with his old captain. He alone could save them from the villainous crew.

The captain himself dreaded an explanation. His old liking for the boy was very far from being extinguished. It was more necessary to him, too, because in all that band he had no real friend or companion.

Gladly would he have resumed his confidential intercourse with Ned, but there was an impassable barrier between them now.

At last the vessel was ready for sea; and as no idlers were allowed on board, both the youths received rating as midshipmen. The crew were generally rough, and the captain feared for their safety, if they were allowed to mix with them; each, therefore, enjoyed the privilege of a state-room in the officers' department.

Loo was thus isolated, and able to preserve the secret of her sex.

The vessel was now headed for the China seas, there to intercept some of the richly-laden vessels, which were the chief prey of pirates and buccaneers. There was no part of the world better isolated for the purpose, there being so many islands, channels and secret bays, where they could defy detection.

Several attempts had been made by Gantling to win something of the confidence of Ned, but, though the latter was scrupulously polite, and even deferential, there was no further advance toward cordiality.

Gantling was much changed. He was moody and thoughtful. None of his old cheerfulness remained. He indulged in no more pleasant visions of isles of beauty, but seemed to think that death had marked him for his own.

He spent much time in writing in his cabin.

About ten days passed; and, though the look-outs never left the mast-head, no vessel had come in sight. The crew began to murmur, and at last the skipper agreed to lie-to, with all sails furled, as the best means of falling in with some unfortunate trader.

Gantling was again confined to his room, and Jabez Grunn ruled the quarter-deck.

It was a calm, dark night, and the brigantine danced lightly on the waters.

It was the watch of the two lads, who always kept together—Ned, in every possible way, easing Loo of all trouble.

At last the darkness began to yield to day. Morning dawned gloomily, and a dense mist hung over the ocean, and shrouded the ship in vapor.

The thickness of the weather made Grunn anxious.

"Go up aloft, you lubber," he said to Loo, "and look if you can see a hole in your blanket."

Ned turned on him.

"My friend is not a sailor, and can not go aloft; I will go."

"Stop there, you powder-monkey! I'll let you see who is master."

"I will try," said Loo, in a faint voice, at the same time advancing toward the rigging.

"You shall not," cried Ned Drake, firmly; "the captain said so."

"Captain or no captain," roared Grunn, now in a furious passion, "if you don't stand aside, and let that little whelp obey me, I'll flay you!"

"Coward and bully!" said Ned Drake, "you dare not!"

"Trice him up!" screamed the infuriated ruffian.

In a moment Ned Drake was caught by two powerful men, and tied up to the rigging.

"Spare him!" gasped Loo, falling on her knees.

"Hold your tongue, or I'll flay you afterward!"

"Ask no favor of the brute," said Ned, with a warning glance.

"A round dozen," said Grunn, addressing

the boatswain, who stood ready with his cat.

At that instant faint sounds, like strokes on a ship's bell when a watch is changed, came stealing over the water.

"Beat to quarters!" cried the voice of the captain, who, pale and shivering, stood on the quarter-deck. "What means this impudent interference with my privileges?"

Grunn muttered something about the boy being insolent, and then untied him.

"It was only to frighten him."

The haze began to disperse, the sun shone out, the morning breeze freshened; for a mile around, the sea was clear, the vapor in huge fleeces rolling off before the wind.

The captain swept the horizon with his glass, and, within a cloud-bank to the southward, he fancied he discovered something darker than the mist.

Then another portion of the fog rolled off, and there, not more than two miles distant, and dead to windward, he saw a brig under easy sail. Her low, black hull and raking masts, told that she was any thing but a trader.

Every man flew to his post, and sail was rapidly made; but their helm was scarcely up, when the stranger changed her course, and bore down upon them, and the rapidly with which canvas was crowded on her to the trucks, told that her crew was numerous.

No mist now remained, the sun poured a glorious flood of light over sea and sky; not a sail was on the ocean far as sight could range, except the stranger and buccaneer.

The breeze freshened, and the brig overhauled the pirate rapidly.

Then the meteor flag of England was flying at her mast-head, and a gun was fired across the bows of the buccaneer.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

##### THE MUTINY.

We left the admiral, and such of his crew as had survived the wreck, on the inhospitable coast, preparing to attempt an escape by means of a raft. It was their only hope, as doubtless no vessels ever willingly visited that rocky shore. To dwell there for any length of time would have been impossible, for not only were provisions very scarce, but the climate was fearfully inclement.

They must all have certainly perished during the winter months.

At the same time, the voyage projected was a terrible one to contemplate. Any thing, however, was better than to die miserably in that desolate region.

The ship had gradually broken up, and the carpenter occupied himself in repairing the larger boat; while, from the wood of the Indian, a stout raft was made, capable of supporting not only the crew, but the provisions, on which life mainly depended.

Since the disappearance of Edward and Louisa, the admiral had fallen ill, and much fear was felt that he would never again lift up his head. The surgeon, however, did all in his power to raise his spirits and to restore his health. Bodily he in part succeeded, but the blow was dreadful; and Sir Stephen brooded over his sorrows, in a way that strangely affected his mental faculties.

A strong sense of duty alone prevented him from utter prostration. He supported the captain, therefore, by his example; and every day, for a certain number of hours, he superintended the work.

The long-boat was the first finished, and supplied with a mast, sail, compass, and as much in the way of provisions as its lockers would hold. The main store was to be placed on the raft itself.

This had a mast as well, with two large oars by way of a rudder.

Every possible exertion was made to have all in readiness ere the winter set in, and that season was surely and rapidly approaching.

The long-boat was to carry the officers, ladies, and twenty of the crew; the raft had to support nearly a hundred seamen, besides provisions. It was, however, very large, and moved up by all the barrels that could be placed on the raft itself.

Still, when all its freight was upon it, it was level with the water. This was of little moment with hardy men, while the sea was calm; but should the wind rise, it would be painfully disagreeable.

The day was bright, chilly and sparkling; the sky was almost cloudless, seaward; the long-boat, towing the raft, sailed with a light breeze out of the harbor.

As in one hour the boat would have run out of sight of the raft unless they were attended, this precaution had been taken, the officers having no desire to abandon the men; on the contrary, they were determined to abide by whatever good or evil future was to befall them, together.

The raft had three masts crosswise, to support the mainsail, close-reefed, and this being a very large sail, they moved tolerably fast for so unwieldy a conveyance.

The admiral and captain had determined to steer as much as possible to the northward and eastward, as they might thus fall in with vessels homeward or outward bound. It was, however, soon seen that their probation would be long. It was the evening of the second day before they lost sight of the shore. With a light wind, and an unwieldy craft, they did not make a knot an hour.

When properly under discipline, on board a comfortable ship, and with regular rations, sailors are not the most contented people in the world; but under circumstances such as those we now describe, they are inveterate grumblers. Fortunately, under the influence of black sheep, they are not something more.

The crew on the raft had no amusement, save conversation and smoking, the whole store of tobacco having been distributed—a very wise precaution, as nothing pleases a seaman more.

They were divided into gangs or watches, under the command of petty officers. The boatswain headed one, and the gunner the other, each having selected his own party.

That of the boatswain consisted of the black sheep, the late mutineers, the discontented in the late wreck.

There were about thirty of them who were quite ripe for any mischief.

Four days passed, and the wind rose slightly, becoming also rather unfavorable. The monotony was, however, still dreadful.

"Slow work this," muttered the boatswain to one of his cronies; "a blind sort of navigation. I don't think it bodes any good."

"But what is to be done?" asked the other, in a doleful tone.

"Humph!—if thirty of the boys were of my mind, I'd soon see."

"What would you do?" continued the other, peering into his face.

"Well, you know, I'd have that precious boat to ourselves, and leave them as stuck to the raft to their fate—that's what I'd do."

"But how?"

"Humph!—if they'd come quietly here, well and good. If not, force must be used."

"I'm agreeable. This here funeral dodge don't suit me."

"Speak, then, to our best men. Not more than thirty must be in the secret. With that number the long-boat will be in good trim."

"It's agreed. When shall we do the deed?"

"The sooner the better. I'll give the signal directly after dark. Let each man drop into the water, and dash for the boat. All who surrender can try their chance on the raft; all who do not—overboard to the fishes."

With this fierce and sanguinary resolution, the men appeared satisfied; the lieutenant going away and whispering to his colleagues what was expected of them.

(To be continued—continued in No. 79.)

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## THE GHOST OF LONG BRANCH.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

I sat on that deserted shore  
And gazed upon the vanished splendor,  
I heard the sea's complaining roar,  
And felt my heart grow sad and tender;  
I cried, with nose and cheek bedewed  
With tears that long had been denied me—  
Where are thy charms, oh, Solitude!  
And then I heard a step behind me.

I looked, I grabbed my old valise,  
My walking-cane and my umbrella,  
And I grew very weak at knees,  
There never was so scared a fellow.  
My hair stood out at forty-five,  
My ears stood at a fearful angle;  
I lost my breath that keeps me alive,  
And thought with fear I'd surely strangle.

I was so scared I couldn't speak,  
And out of three feet growth was stunted,  
I saw with signs of growth weak—  
It was a phantom I confronted!  
A woman's figure, lank and thin;  
Unto her hair she made clinging;  
With old straw hat tied 'neath her chin,  
And robes that sadly needed wringing.

She stood before me, ghostly still,  
With nothing on her feet but bunions,  
Her breath was tremulous and chill,  
And gave slight evidence of onions.  
She spoke: "Why dost thou hither come?"  
I said: "I beg your pardon, madam,  
I truly wish I were at home—  
I'd stay there sure as Adam's Adam."

"Listen!" She grasped me by the arm,  
That trembled in her ghostly fingers:  
"O all who come to Long Branch warm,  
I am the only one that lingers."  
I am the Ghost of Long Branch! See  
What run early frosts have brought me!  
Where are my throngs that here made glow?  
Said I: "Kind madam, there you've got me!"

"Those corridors are silent now  
Which were alive with gay flirtations,  
And rattled with the ceaseless flow  
Of chatter upon all occasions,  
And Charles Augustus, millionaire,  
How echoed there his perfect French, sir,  
In maiden ears! I wonder where  
Abouts he keeps his cobbler's bench, sir?"

"Hushed is the evening violin,  
That set a hundred feet a-dancing!  
Where are the eyes which smiled to win—  
The arms that clasped those waists entrancing?  
The mammae ranged in threes and fours  
To watch their daughters with proud vision—  
Themselves the shrewd ambassadors  
Of many a matrimonial mission?"

"Where now are all the tender vows  
Which here by lovers' lips were spoken?  
Gone like the crowd that comes and goes—  
Or like those gallants badly broken!  
This very air that floats so still  
In many a tender word was molded,  
Or wreathed around the lips at will  
Of maid who sighed or wife who scolded."

"The life and light, the glass and sheen,  
Have faded with the faded season:  
The song, the mirth, the dance, the din,  
The shout, the laugh, the lover's treason.  
The very sea has lost its soul:  
Back to his caves has wandered Neptune;  
No more the flag adorns the pole:  
The sea is cold, and all's deception!"

"Unholy feet dare not intrude  
Upon these bounds: I'm glad I've got you;  
But you would run off if you could—  
Say, have you got a dime about you?  
My costume well befits my state:  
Alas, that I should look so meanly!  
Next summer, it is long to wait,  
Next summer and you'll see me queerly."

Here she put up her parasol,  
Quite sagged and dilapidated;  
She wiped her nose with a button-hole,  
And like cheap calico she faded.  
Now, every tale, what'er it is,  
Should wind up with a moral, duly;  
If you discover one in this  
You can do more than I can, truly.

## The Wedding Gift.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

"I DID not think you would take it so hard, Leona," and the face of the handsome speaker wore an expression of regret, as he gazed upon the woman before him.

"Take it so hard!" and there was a bitter cadence in the words that dropped slowly from her lips, as her flashing eyes met his, fully, unflinchingly.

She was a beautiful woman, this Leona Monteith, orientally so. Tall and stately, her form superbly developed; her features regular and mobile; her skin a rich olive, through which came dashes of crimson as emotion quickened the flow of blood; her eyes large, lustrous and pitchy black, that could flash with furious anger, or melt with the soft voluptuousness of love, known only to children of a sunny clime; her hair long, luxuriant and of a purplish-black sheen; and now as she drew her queenly form erect with a scornful smile curving the full, red lips, she seemed one born to command.

The man who stood before her was a worthy mate, in looks, at least. Tall, athletic, graceful, handsome; a deep, mellow voice, a winning smile. Such was Eugene Cartwright.

"Take it so hard!" echoed Leona, bitterly. "You choose strange words, truly! You have called me your little wife—you have petted and caressed me; have told me time without end, that you loved me and me only. Now you say that it is all over; that you do not love me—that you are about to be married to another, and that we must part forever. And then—you did not think I would take it so hard!" and there was a hysterical ring in the last words of the lady.

"Leona—Miss Monteith—"

"Hush! don't speak to me. You have said enough. My God! too much already! But friends—now, I have told you I loved you—but I—I lied. I do not love you—I hate you—despise you! There is the door—begone!" and she pointed with one hand, while her little foot stamped heavily upon the carpeted floor.

There was a look upon the gentleman's face that was new to it. This reception was more than he had counted upon. It was a rather stormy ending to his little love-passion, he called it.

It had been very pleasant, this pastime of his, during the past month. Eugene Cartwright had met Leona Monteith, had been attracted by her regal beauty, and from a ball-room acquaintance, had become a daily visitor at the house. 'Tis true, he had gone further than he intended doing, at first, but then he told himself that she met him halfway, and had no one to blame but herself.

The fact was, Eugene was flattered by the evident preference of the belle, and took pride in drawing this forth to excite the jealousy of less fortunate swains. And most young people know—from hearsay, if not experience—that a flirtation is easier carried on, after a certain point is reached, than broken off. So though Eugene meant no real harm, he had deeply wronged the lady.

The time came for him to bring his visit to a close, and return home to prepare for his wedding with Minnie Haskins. He had called on this day to tell Leona of the wedding, extending her an invitation. It was a bitter blow, and the woman felt it deeply. Her whole heart's love had been poured out upon the handsome Virginian, and even the knowledge of his deceit—tacit though it

was—was not strong enough to kill this love.

As he left the house, Leona sunk to the floor, in a writhing heap, moaning out her agony of spirit, until it seemed as though her heart would break. Her fiery, passionate nature made the blow harder to bear.

But then she roused up. Her face was pale—almost ghastly—but her eyes gleamed like living coals, and her teeth were tightly compressed. A stern resolve had taken possession of her mind. She would be revenged for this biting wrong.

Ah! Eugene Cartwright would not have recognized her now for the gentle, loving girl he had so often caressed. Then, a look, a nod of his sufficient. She was a loving, obedient servant. But now!

His "little flirtation," with its abrupt ending, had awakened the deadly spirit—long slumbering, lying dormant—she had inherited from her Spanish mother. Before, she had been a child; now she was a woman, slighted, scorned, insulted.

She emerged from the house and glided along through the garden to where stood the slave quarters. Here she beckoned to a man, an old, gray-headed negro, who was a mystery—and at the same time a terror—to the simple-minded slaves. They believed he possessed the "evil eye," and all shunned him. To him Leona spoke long and earnestly. Then, with a cold, stony glitter in her black eyes, she returned to the house.

Eugene Cartwright rode slowly along the shaded road, a troubled expression upon his face. He did not derive half the pleasure from that parting interview he had anticipated. But he could not accuse himself of any great wrong; it was "only a flirtation," and that was a fashionable sin.



THE WEDDING GIFT.

But, then, as he neared home, he banished this troublesome subject from his thoughts, and recalled Minnie Haskins—sweet Minnie, who was to become his bride within one short week. Before dusk he had ridden the three score miles, and reached his home.

Two days after, he was at the house of Mr. Haskins, his daily custom now, and truly he had a fair excuse. Equally beautiful, but far more lovely than Leona—Eugene said in his own mind—was Minnie, his lady love.

She was about the medium height, of a form full, rounded and graceful, a complexion pure and transparent, of the "blended" lily and rose. Her face a pure oval; her features regular. A mouth that bewitched the beholder despite himself; a rich, gleaming laugh, that displayed twin rows of even, shining teeth, behind their ruby portals; eyes deeply, beautifully blue, large and lustrous. Her hair a rich golden brown, hung in masses down her shoulders, wavy and crinkling, soft and glossy as silk.

Eugene and Minnie left the house and entered the park-like grounds for a stroll. The sky was slightly overcast, but the weather was cool and balmy. There were symptoms of a storm, but the young people heeded them not, as they walked on, arm in arm, breathing those soft nothings habitual to lovers, that are priceless to them, though so rapid and nonsensical when analyzed.

They gained the woods and were idly rambling along, lost to all consciousness save of each other, when they were interrupted by the approach of a negro servant, bearing a small box in his hands. He handed this to Minnie, with a respectful bow.

"What is it—where did you get it, Sam?" she asked, curiously.

"A gemmion giv it to me. He say un fo' nobody but young missy. Den he rid off ag'in."

"See, Eugene," cried Minnie, as Sam turned away, and she pointed out some words written upon the box:  
"For Miss Minnie Haskins. A wedding gift from a friend."

The box was a small one; the cover, of some metal, was pierced full of minute holes. The key was attached by a silver chain.

"Let me open it, Minnie," said Eugene, a strange premonition of impending peril taking possession of his mind.

"No—'tis my first present—I will open it myself," and, with a merry laugh, she inserted and turned the key.

But the laugh turned to a shriek of horror, as the lid sprung open with a sharp click. A hideous sight was revealed. A loathsome form lay coiled up in the box. Then the ugly, lance-like head shot up—a shrill hiss, and a venomous copper-head snake sunk its fangs deep into the bosom of the maiden, just below her throat.

With a hoarse cry of horror Eugene plucked the reptile away, and caught the fainting form of his loved one in his arms. A large drop of blood now marked the spot where the poison-laden fangs had penetrated. To this he fastened his lips. He thought not of danger to himself—only thought of the peril of his loved one.

Thus he bore her toward the house, sucking frantically at the wound, his tongue and lips smarting from the poison extracted. A physician was summoned, but before he came, Minnie was out of danger. Her lover had saved her life by his prompt action, and the poison, though so virulent, only left a slight scar as a reminiscence of the adventure.

It was never known for certain who had made the foul attempt at murder, though Eugene had his suspicions. Leona, if indeed it was her, made no further attempt at revenge, but, within a year from the marriage of Eugene and Minnie, bestowed her hand upon one who had before sighed in vain.

Now, Leona and Minnie are close and intimate friends.

"And the gambler, colonel. How about him?" asked a gentleman, as the old man paused.

"Well, that is a different sort of a story, Hammond," he replied, slowly. "Here are certain recollections connected with it that are not altogether pleasant; but, if you like, I'll tell it."

"By all means, colonel!" cried several voices.

"It was many years ago, and I was just so many years younger than I am now, when the occurrence took place, and yet it really seems as if 'twere only yesterday. When you youngsters get as near the end as I am, you will understand how that can be."

"At that time, as now, I was traveling heavily—such games, I can tell you, as it were, you must know, as is the Old Diana."

"Stern-wheelers were all we had in those days, and the best of them were but slow affairs. The Magnolia was no exception to the rule, and we bogged along, day after day, at a regular snail's pace."

"Something had to be done to kill time, and, as a matter of course, cards were resorted to. At that time card-playing wasn't so universal a practice as it is now; but, when gentlemen sat down, they played heavily—such games, I can tell you, as it would open your eyes to see. There was on board a nice-looking young fellow, who had his sister with him, taking her home from school, he said. He had plenty of money, and bet it with a free hand."

"At first he was in bad luck, but in a few days fortune changed, and he began winning, and kept it up until he had driven some of the passengers to the necessity of drawing checks on their bankers."

"He must have reaped a powerful harvest, but, unluckily, one night, a United States paymaster, who was in the game, detected him cheating, and, going round the table, he seized his arm, and drew half a dozen cards from his coat-sleeve."

"You ought to have seen the row! In those days, and under such circumstances, cheating was a grave offense, and in a twinkling they had him out on the guards, and were about to launch him overboard."

"The captain came up, took a good, long look at his face, and suddenly asked him if his name wasn't Watson."

"The young chap was game, and owned up."

"I thought so," said the captain; "he is one of the most dangerous gamblers between Louisville and New Orleans."

"When the crowd heard that, they grappled him, and in a moment more he would have been over, when I interfered, plead for his life, and hard too, I tell you; and, being pretty well known to most of the passengers, succeeded in begging him off."

"He was made to restore the money he had won, and he and his sister were put ashore at the first landing."

"The circumstance was talked of for a few hours, and then passed from our minds."

"Five years passed, and, although I traveled up and down the river a good deal, I never met the gambler, Watson."

"I asked about him once or twice, and was informed that he had been killed in a row at Napoleon—a spot, by the way, where many a one of his kind has met the same fate."

"Well, about five years afterward, a terrible rumour was raised all over the South in regard to a powerful and thoroughly organized band of horse-thieves, who were sweeping the country of every horse or mule that was worth the bridle he stood in. They stole horses under our very noses. One man had a fine stallion, and, to save him he put him nights in a good-sized room adjoining the kitchen."

"He'd better left the horse in the stable, for the villains broke in, and not only did they carry the horse off, but gutted the house of every thing valuable besides."

"At the very height of the excitement, business called me over into Arkansas, but, before going, I determined to sell a fine pair of wicked bays, that I had purchased a year previous for my family carriage, fearing that they would be stolen during my absence."

"Of course I sold at a great sacrifice, but was glad to get rid of them on any terms, almost."

"By some means—a slight mistake in the first, I think—two bills of sale were made out, and, by chance, I put the first in my pocket-book. Of course it contained a minute description of the animals that I had sold."

"When I reached Little Rock, I found the excitement was even greater than it was in Mississippi. Nothing was talked of but horse-thieves, and vigilance committees were forming in every town and cross-road hamlet in the State."

"From Little Rock my business led me out into the interior, where, after visiting several places, I brought up at the village of Mason, a place of several hundred inhabitants."

"As I rode up to the tavern and dismounted, I saw that the bystanders, of whom there were twenty or more, regarded me closely, and fell to whispering among themselves."

"I also observed that all over the square little knots of people were assembled, talking earnestly, and, in some cases, evidently under great excitement. Horse-thieves again, I thought, and, going into the bar-room, I engaged lodgings for the night."

"I soon saw that I was regarded with suspicion, but I said nothing, and started out to find the man whom I had come to see."

"On inquiring for him, I was coldly informed that he had left the place, and you may imagine my surprise when, upon further inquiry, I found that he had fled secretly, because of certain suspicions that were pointing toward him."

"I at once saw the delicacy of my position. No one else in the place knew me. I had brought no letters of introduction, and, worse than all, I was hunting for a man who was suspected of being one of the horse-thieves."

"I determined to leave next morning, and, with a view to an early start, I paid my bill that night, left directions when to be aroused, and retired to bed."

"I could not have been long asleep, when a violent noise at my door, coupled with a demand to open, brought me suddenly to a realization that something was going to happen."

"I opened the door, and in marched the landlord, followed by half a dozen others—citizens of the place. The former held in his hand an open letter, which he coolly handed to me, at the same time sneeringly asking if it was mine."

"I glanced at it, and discovered that it was the duplicate sale-bill of my horses. I said it was, and then asked, why all this ceremony about so simple a matter."

"Not so simple as you may think, sir," replied one of the party. "You are here under very suspicious circumstances, to say the least. We find you inquiring after a man whom we know, or believe to be, a horse-thief, and on top of this we by chance discover this sale-bill of a pair of horses that were stolen from this neighborhood a few weeks since. The description of the animals is perfect, and you must account for their being in your possession."

"Here was a mess. I saw the danger that menaced, and felt that I was in a critical position. If they would give me time I knew I could set things right, but these devilish vigilance committees do not like to wait, and, what's more, they won't."

"I told my story, clearly and in a straightforward manner, but I saw it made no impression in my favor."

"I was carried off and locked up in the log jail, being told that my trial would come off next day at noon."

"Noon came, and, when I was brought out, I saw that the town was full of people. The news had spread like wildfire, and everybody and their families had come to see the horse-thief placed. That would be the end of it, and they all knew it."

"The trial was a mere farce. The owner of the bob-tail bays recognized his horses from the description, and, in spite of my assertions that, if they would give me forty-eight hours' time, I would prove my innocence, they deliberately adjudged that I should be hanged by the neck to the most convenient tree."

"I tell you, gentlemen, that it was rough! No one can imagine the feelings of an innocent man under such circumstances, and I hope that none here ever be placed in similar ones. Three hours were allowed me to prepare, and these quickly passed away."

"I was again led out of the jail, and, followed by the multitude, was dragged to the oak tree on the outskirts of the town, to be hanged. Luckily for me, there was one of those long-winded, hard-praying preachers present, and, after the rope had been adjusted, he began services that lasted fully an hour."

"I have been fond of that style of preaching ever since, for that long prayer, meant to save my soul, saved my life as well."

"Hardly had he ceased, when a sudden commotion arose, mingled with the rapid hoof-strokes of horses, and shouts of men bidding the executioners to 'hold on!'"

"I glanced up, and beheld a small body of horsemen, the foremost of which was leading a pair of bob-tail bays, dashing down the road at full speed toward where we stood."

"They pulled up a few paces from the crowd, and the one who held the pair rode a little forward, removed a crape mask, and said:

"You are about to hang an innocent man. I have heard what he said, and every word is true, for I know it to be so. Here are the horses for the theft of which he is to suffer. They have never left the State, and hence he could not have sold them in Mississippi."

"So saying, he threw the halter on the ground, and, turning to me, again spoke:

"You once saved my life from a mob, and now I have returned the kindness. You remember the gambler, Watson. He swore never to forget you, and he has kept his word."

"Then, wheeling his horse, a splendid animal, like lightning, and shouting 'Away, boys!' was off down the road and out of sight before the Vigilantes had fully realized what had happened."

"A few straggling shots were fired after the retreating party, but, I believe, no harm was done."

## Short Stories from History.

**Public Duty and Private Friendship.**—When Cleon came into the administration of public affairs at Athens, he assembled all his friends and declared to them that from that moment he renounced their friendship, lest it should prove an obstacle to him in the discharge of his duty, and induce him to act with partiality and injustice. As Plutarch, however, very fairly observes, it was not his friends, but his passions, which he ought to have renounced. An anecdote is told of a patriot of modern times—the great Washington—which exhibits, in a much finer light, the distinction between public duty and private friendship. During his administration as President of the United States, a gentleman, the friend and companion of the general, throughout the whole course of the Revolutionary War, applied for a lucrative and very responsible office. The gentleman was at all times welcome to Washington's table; he had been, to a certain degree, necessary to the domestic repose of a man who had for seven years fought the battles of his country, and who had now undertaken the task of wielding her political energies. At all times, and in all places, Washington regarded his revolutionary associate with an eye of evident partiality and kindness. He was a jovial, pleasant and unobtrusive companion, in applying for the office, it was accordingly in the full confidence of success, and his friends already cheered him on the prospect of his arrival at competency and ease. The opponent of this gentleman was known to be decidedly hostile to the politics of Washington—he had even made himself conspicuous among the ranks of opposition. He had, however, the temerity to stand as a candidate for the office to which the friend and the favorite of Washington aspired. He had nothing to urge in favor of his pretensions but strong integrity, promptitude and fidelity in business, and every quality which, if called into exercise, would render service to the state. Every one considered the application of this man hopeless, and yet he dared to stand candidate. What was the result? The enemy of Washington was appointed to the office, and his table companion was left destitute and dejected. A mutual friend ventured to remonstrate with the President on the injustice of his appointment. "My friend," said he, "I receive with cordial welcome; he is welcome to my house, welcome to my heart; but, with all his good qualities, he is not a man of business. His opponent is, with all his political hostility to me, a man of business; my private feelings have nothing to do in this case. I am not George Washington, but President of the United States; as George Washington, I would do this man any kindness in my power, but as President of the United States, I can do nothing."